

ADVISORY COUNCIL
FOR ADULT
AND CONTINUING
EDUCATION

REPORT

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**POLITICAL
EDUCATION
FOR ADULTS**

BTR

The Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education is established by the Secretary of State for Education and Science with the following remit:

To advise generally on matters relevant to the provision of education for adults in England and Wales, and in particular:

- (a) to promote co-operation between the various bodies in adult education and review current practice, organisation and priorities, with a view to the most effective deployment of available resources; and*
- (b) to promote the development of future policies and priorities with full regard to the concept of education as a process continuing throughout life.*

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YOUTH & COMMUNITY EDUCATION
RESOURCE BASE

POLITICAL EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

Report on the provision of the information and skills which enable people to understand political processes and issues and to participate in the determination and administration of public policy

prepared for the
Advisory Council
by a committee
convened by H D Hughes
with papers by

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CHAIRMAN'S PREFACE

In advising on the development of adult and continuing education in England and Wales the Advisory Council has through the past five and a half years undertaken an extremely wide range of enquiries, all of which have led to the publication of reports. The twenty-three reports which have so far appeared can be broadly distinguished as dealing either with policy and organisation, or curriculum and programme development, or straightforward fact-finding.

The following report belongs principally to the second category, in that the Council aims here to encourage a wider understanding of what is needed to develop the present provision of political education for adults. However, this has necessarily meant that some attention has also been given to the policies and organisation needed to deliver that provision, and to some fact-finding about the present supply and demand for it.

The Council is very much aware that the term 'political education' is open to different interpretations, and that a few people mistakenly equate that term with political indoctrination or propaganda. It would be possible but merely cosmetic to find a safer adjective; 'political' is accurate.

The Council's interpretation of the phrase excludes both the promotion of any particular form of party politics and the pushing of any particular political ideology. Education about the political processes of a democracy is a proper and necessary area of study for every citizen. We subscribe to that long and honourable tradition in British adult education which seeks to help individual citizens improve their knowledge of how their political system works and thus contribute more actively towards making a reality of the democratic assumptions and aspirations of that system.

So the Council regards political education as an essential part of the curriculum of adult education among other key parts, some of which we have already reported on, such as basic education, the sciences, and the arts.

For this reason the Council invited a number of people experienced in this field to join some of the members of the Council to prepare a report.

The way in which that Committee has done its work is described in the first chapter. The Council very much appreciates the care with which the Committee set about mapping its area of enquiry, and we strongly approve their working definition of adult political education as "the provision of the information and skills which enable people to understand political processes and to participate in the determination and administration of public policy".

We are equally appreciative of the time and energy which the members of the Committee gave so freely in compiling their report. The Council could spare very little of its funds for assistance to them. The Committee therefore more than adequately pooled its own resources of knowledge and experience. In consequence the following report is largely made up of papers prepared by individual members of the Committee. Hence, the views expressed and the conclusions drawn in the report are those of the authors. Nevertheless those views are well-informed and grounded in practical experience.

The Council's thanks are due to Mr H D Hughes, the Committee's convenor, and those who served on the committee: Mr Peter Clyne, Ms Gilly Greensitt, Dr Jagdish Gundara, Mr Roy Jackson, Mr Peter Linklater, Dr William Hampton, Professor Walter James, and Professor F F Ridley. The Committee also benefited from the assistance of Mr Sean McGinn HMI, who organised a DES/HMI short course on 'Adult Education and Social Responsibility' at Avery Hill College in December 1982, which gave an opportunity for several members of the Committee to exchange information and ideas with other adult educators. We are also indebted to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, in particular Mr Roy Manley and Mr Leo Jago, for their co-operation in surveying political education work in voluntary organisations. Similarly we acknowledge the help received from the Anglo-German Foundation and the University of Mainz in making available information from West Germany. Finally we are grateful to Miss Rita Cordon for the study which she undertook on the committee's behalf in Liverpool, and for the guidance in that study given by Ms Elizabeth Filkin of the Institute of Extension Studies at the University of Liverpool.

RICHARD HOGGART
Chairman of Council

March 1983

CONTENTS

CHAIRMAN'S PREFACE	ii
The Authors	v
Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSIONS <i>Advisory Council's Political Education Committee</i>	1
Chapter 2 WHAT ADULTS? WHAT POLITICS? <i>F F Ridley</i>	8
Chapter 3 EXISTING PROVISION AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS <i>W A Hampton</i>	25
Chapter 4 THE PROBLEMS OF PROVISION: A LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY VIEW <i>P Clyne</i>	33
Chapter 5 THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR <i>Advisory Council's Secretariat</i>	38
Chapter 6 POLITICAL EDUCATION FOR ADULTS IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY <i>J Gundara</i>	43
Chapter 7 THE MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES <i>Advisory Council's Secretariat</i>	51
Chapter 8 THE POLITICAL EDUCATION NEEDS OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS: A LIVERPOOL SURVEY <i>R Cordon</i>	58
Chapter 9 THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT <i>W James</i>	76
Chapter 10 POLITICAL EDUCATION FOR ADULTS IN FRANKFURT <i>T Böhmer</i>	85
Notes and References	101
Advisory Council and Committee Membership	104

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSIONS

by the Advisory Council's Committee on Political Education for Adults

"If political education is not a 'safe thing' neither is democracy, and one will not flourish without the other." (Report of the Review Group on the Youth Service, 1982).

We present this report to the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education in the belief that political education is a vital part of adult and continuing education deserving greater priority of attention than it has received in recent years.

The term 'political education' is open to a variety of interpretations. Some would argue that the whole of adult education is in a sense political, and that it is a process rather than a subject. Personal development through education of members of the less privileged groups in society in itself does something to redress the social balance. To quote one discussion group report from a DES/HMI course held in December 1982: *"For many women the step out of the home and into an education process is a political act."* We needed a more restricted definition than that.

With limited time and resources at our disposal, we decided to concentrate our attention on the practical aspects of the development of political education for adults in such a way as to increase and raise the level of participation in public affairs. We adopted the following terms of reference for our work:

"The provision of the information and skills which enable people to understand political processes and to participate in the determination and administration of public policy."

This definition clearly reflects the practical approach to political literacy advocated in many reports in recent years. It seeks to raise the level of understanding of citizens' rights and responsibilities as an essential component of education for democracy. In seeking to combat apathy and alienation from the political system, it is not neutral, but as an educational process it brings critical analysis to bear on all forms of indoctrination or propaganda.

Much attention has been given in recent years to the nature and purpose of political education, particularly in the schools and the youth service. The Programme for Political Education sponsored by the Hansard Society and the Politics Association, with the support of the Department of Education and Science, developed the concept of political literacy as a basis for curricular reform. This moved away from traditional academic courses of political theory and the study of the

constitution to the practical study of the working of the political system, and the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for active participation in citizenship. Social education and preparation for a participatory role in adult society have been seen by Ministers of both major political parties and by HM Inspectorate to be an essential part of the school curriculum. In 1982 the Youth Service Review Group, established by the Department of Education and Science, recommended that *"the provision of political education should be a normal part of the Youth Service curriculum, pursued in such ways as to involve active participation."* *"Political education"* they stated *"is not the same thing as political studies of civics....What is required is experience of such a kind that the young people learn to claim their right to influence the society in which they live and to have a say in how it is run. It is active participation in some form of political activity, formal or informal, which really counts...."* *"Amongst the adult population"* said the report *"there is widespread political illiteracy and indeed a failure to understand what 'politics' is. Political education then is necessary."*

Whilst welcoming these developments, many adult educators would argue that political education is especially appropriate in adult and continuing education, where students can draw on practical experience and bring greater maturity of judgement to bear on the issues involved. The provision of political education has throughout this century at least been a major strand in 'the great tradition' of British adult education, and its importance has been stressed in all the major reviews of the field. Thus the Russell Report⁽¹⁾ in 1973 specified the needs related to the place of the individual in society, including:

- *'role education',providing the background of knowledge, especially in relation to social change, through which the individual's role can be more responsibly charged in society, in industry, in voluntary service, or in public work of any kind.*
- *social and political education of very broad kinds, designed to enable the individual to understand and play his part as citizen, voluntary worker, consumer.*
- *community education, providing the background of knowledge and understanding upon which effective action for community purposes, including community development in the strict sense, can be founded.*
- *education for social leadership.*

Similarly, the Venables Report to the Open University⁽²⁾ in 1976 stressed the importance of *"adult concern courses and materials"*, including problems of dealing with local and central government authorities, participating in change, and understanding how society affects the individual.

Political and social education was one of the four priority areas of

work of the Workers' Educational Association endorsed by the Russell Committee⁽³⁾: *"This conception we feel to have special value today. New avenues of activity have begun to appear in courses run in co-operation with Oxfam, Shelter and similar socially oriented organisations, and in certain kinds of 'role education' for those engaged in local government and in social and political activity."*

From this, it might be felt that it is no longer necessary to argue the case for political education for adults. Yet Dr Hampton's 1980 survey of the provision of 'education for participation' by adult education agencies found that *"the overall impression of the distribution of this work is sporadic and spasmodic. Education for participation represents only a minor theme in adult education; few agencies devote many of their resources to work of this kind, and virtually none have considered policies for this aspect of their activities."*⁽⁴⁾ In this report the Universities Council called for a reaffirmation of the significance of British adult political education, for the establishment of a continuing forum of interested parties, for research into provision by non-educational bodies, and for a review of various forms of funding, to *"remedy the educational vacuum at the heart of democracy"*.

Also in 1980, a study group on civic and political education recommended the setting up for adult education of a parallel project to those established for schools and further education, to study: the priority need of civic and political education related to public and community life; the role of the statutory system of adult and continuing education in providing this; the extension of financial and educational aid to voluntary bodies, including 'committed organisations' (parties and pressure groups); the possibility of developing joint programmes in conjunction with other public agencies; and the facilitation of international contacts in the field.

The following report is made up of individual papers prepared by members of the Committee and revised in the light of discussion with a cross-section of adult educators attending a DES/HMI course in December 1982. Also included are a report of a survey of the work of a sample of voluntary bodies undertaken in conjunction with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, and the responses of the major political parties to a similar approach concerning their work in political education. The Committee sponsored a field survey of the political education needs of community organisations in Liverpool, and a comparable report on Frankfurt, secured with the help of the Anglo-German Foundation.

As will be seen from the papers, there is a broad measure of agreement in the Committee that **adult education bodies, both statutory and voluntary, should develop a greater role in political education, and that experiential and practical approaches should be**

developed, in co-operation with a wide range of organisations actively involved in public affairs.

Professor Ridley makes a strong case for role-oriented education for specialised groups, beginning at local level with the study of public administration, law and techniques of political action. 'Practically oriented role education' will, he argues, have a market appeal. Positive discrimination by educational agencies could help to redress the uneven balance in society by assisting less privileged groups to acquire the practical knowledge they need in order to achieve their objectives. By encouraging participation this will tend to strengthen representative democracy and the governmental process. The study of issues and principles will inevitably emerge in the process. Similarly Dr Hampton, whilst indicating the difficulties, advocates a shift to methods of 'challenge' in adult education, forming educational links with pressure groups at both a national and local level.

Professor James calls for 'action-based learning' related to performance in life and action on the environment, and claims that this is a dominant trend in European adult education from which we should not stand aside. Peter Clyne sets out the responsibilities and limitations of the provision of political education for a participatory democracy within the statutory local government service. Dr Gundara discusses the special problems posed for political education in a multi-cultural society, and stresses the importance of a constructive approach to the teaching of race relations as a major component of adult education.

What then is needed to secure the development of adult political education on these lines? We set out below a number of general conclusions dealing with some of the main problems which emerged in the course of our work, and which are referred to in the individual papers and reports.

The main need, as we see it, is to secure a general acceptance of the importance of raising the level of political education, and the conditions and resources necessary for this, in political, administrative and educational circles. This requires a combined operation by all concerned, at national and local level. To achieve this, a national lead is required. **We would like to see the Department of Education and Science issuing suitable guidance to local education authorities and other providing bodies concerning the importance of political education as an integral part of adult and continuing education, and drawing on the experience of HMI in indicating examples of good practice which might be more widely adopted.**

Local education authorities and Responsible Bodies should be invited to review their programme of work to ensure that there is comprehensive provision to cater for the varied needs of the adult

population in their area. They should seek to open discussions with as wide a range as possible of voluntary bodies and community groups to ascertain their needs and to examine the most suitable forms of co-operation in the provision of political education.

Politics in a democratic and pluralist society inevitably involves conflicting viewpoints and controversy. A wide degree of tolerance is essential in political education. For this reason, some local education authorities have been inclined to leave this difficult field to the Responsible Bodies which are less directly accountable to political control, though as grant-aided bodies they are not immune. Some government agencies have sought to exclude projects likely to cause political controversy from grant-aided programmes. A change of attitudes is required, so that all concerned are willing to recognise the truth of Tawney's dictum, "the way for an institution or a movement to achieve impartiality is not to attempt to chase all the partialities out....it is to draw as many as possible of the partialities in", insisting on the frank exchange of open argument, and a respectful hearing of the opinions of all. This is well understood by experienced adult educators, but it might be helpful to administrators and a safeguard for tutors **if the basic principles governing political education were formulated in a set of guidelines or code of conduct for all concerned.** As Mr Clyne points out, there are delicate distinctions to be drawn between the role of political educators and political action, and those concerned need clear terms of reference and protection from ill-informed and partisan attacks upon their work.

Whether justified or not, the view is widely held among practitioners that existing regulations and administrative practices are inhibiting factors in developing new and less formal methods of political education. As indicated in the Liverpool survey and elsewhere, one condition of the successful development of educational work in co-operation with community groups and political organisations is flexibility of approach and the capacity and willingness to respond rapidly to their immediate needs and interests. Often the skills required are those of development workers rather than tutors. Formal education programmes, with registration periods, minimum size of classes and prescribed fees may well seem irrelevant when what is needed is practical advice and access to technical resources and sources of information. **The Department of Education and Science should draw on the experience of the providing bodies and HM Inspectors in reviewing existing regulations and methods of evaluation to see what changes might be required to facilitate new initiatives and less formal methods of work.**

Ideally, the provision of political education needs a firm basis and specific recognition in law. The legislative basis of further education is at present under review, and it is widely recognised that a new

comprehensive definition of adult and continuing education is required. Such a definition should include a clear recognition that political education is an integral part of the education of adults and that it is the duty of the local education authorities, in co-operation with the other educational agencies concerned, to secure the provision in their area of adequate facilities for its development. We note that the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education, in common with other bodies, has followed international practice in using the term 'civic education' as part of its recommended legislative definition of adult and continuing education. In our view 'political education' is a term more generally understood and in accord with the development of the subject as we understand it.

To some considerable extent, however, the problem of the adequate development of political education is one of resources. In present circumstances, these will only be forthcoming if providing bodies are prepared to review their programmes and priorities. In our view, **the employment of development workers with the necessary back-up to undertake informal and outreach work in political education in response to the needs and demands of voluntary bodies and groups in the community should have a high priority.** The present share of the education and training budget devoted to political education is in no way proportionate to the need.

Political education for adults is widely recognised overseas as having a significant contribution to make to the successful functioning of democratic life. We have been struck by the examples drawn to our attention of community involvement in local political decisions such as environmental planning in the United States of America, stimulated by the active role of adult education bodies and the constitutional emphasis on citizens' rights. This reinforces our view that the education of citizens in their various roles, as ratepayers, trade unionists and voters cannot receive too much emphasis if a truly open society is to be achieved wherein the influence of centralist political and bureaucratic decisions can be properly tempered by local knowledge and sensitivity. We would expect this proposition to win the assent of all political parties in the House of Commons.

It is noteworthy that in a number of countries, including West Germany, Austria and Scandinavia, direct state aid is given on a non-discriminatory basis to educational bodies linked with political parties, thus enabling them to develop programmes of political education for their members. The Houghton report on *Financial Aid to Political Parties*⁽⁵⁾ included training and political education as a legitimate and important area for public subsidy. The voluntary organisations which responded to our questionnaire also indicated that shortage of resources was a major factor limiting the development of their educational work, and the great majority of those

responding indicated that they would welcome public funding. **The British Government might with advantage draw on the practices developed in other countries to introduce a scheme of public funding on a non-discriminatory basis for political parties and other 'committed' organisations for educational purposes.**

It also emerged from our enquiry that voluntary organisations with charitable status find themselves inhibited from developing work in the field of political education by the uncertainties in the law of charities and the fear of prejudicing their status in the eyes of the charity commissioners. We were given evidence to the effect that **a revision of the law to provide greater clarity and certainty in this respect is long overdue, to enable charitable organisations to engage freely in political education related to their purposes.**

We are conscious of the fact that the papers in this report cover only limited aspects of the field of political education of adults, concerned mainly with the work of the mainstream agencies of adult education, statutory and voluntary, and the possibilities of more effective co-operation between them and those seeking to participate in public affairs. One notable area referred to in some of the papers is the role of multi-media education, which deserves a separate study in itself. The situation is one of rapid change and development, and we would like to see more adult education agencies taking initiatives in programme planning and preparation. We hope that the broadcasting agencies and their educational advisory councils will increasingly seek ways and means of providing fuller opportunities of access to the media to the full plurality of groups involved in political education.

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Chapter Two

WHAT ADULTS? WHAT POLITICS?

by Frederick Ridley

Adult education has a whole range of purposes. So does political education. Though definitions are tedious, we can only discuss course contents by reference to the purpose such courses are intended to serve. The real title of this paper might therefore be 'Who and What?'. We shall look first at political education for a cross-section of citizens, then at role-oriented education. Some preliminary comments are necessary, however, to explain the limitations of this paper.

My brief is to consider what the contents of adult education courses in 'politics' might be. I am not concerned with political education in its wider sense.

Some will argue that since politics permeates all life, all education has political implications. It may be, for example, that teaching methods shape political attitudes as much as the substance of what is taught and that education for democracy requires the democratisation of education itself. The sort of political education I advocate here certainly requires a 'democratic' partnership between course providers and their clientele, but the question of teaching methods does not fall into my remit.

It can also be argued that political education should form part of a much wider range of courses than those labelled politics. Literature, for example, may require a political dimension if it is to be fully understood; conversely, it may provide a good way into the teaching of politics. This strategy may also give access to a wider audience. It does not, however, fall into my remit either.

The focus here is on that part of political education which can be formally classified as such. This limitation reflects the brief mentioned above but there is a more practical reason as well. The suggestion that all providers of adult education should consider the possibility of introducing some politics into what they teach is almost platitudinous. Generalisations of this sort offer very little that has a chance of adoption. Realistic proposals need to be linked to the fields in which the providers of adult political education already operate or to which they have access, to courses which can be mounted without a change of heart throughout the entire educational system.

There is another limitation to this paper. It is not an essay in political science and does not discuss the nature of the political system in which political education takes place. It may well be that this system affects what can and what cannot be offered in the way of courses. Some will also say that existing power structures limit the use citizens can make

of political skills. An obvious objection to proposals for strengthening the political capacity of citizens at everyday levels of contact with authority is that a point will be reached at which they find their efforts to participate in decision-making frustrated unless the political system as a whole is transformed. The proposals made in this paper emphasise the benefits to be gained from courses which concentrate on skills required at the 'micro' rather than 'macro' levels of politics. The objection mentioned above is relevant but seriously underrates the benefit disadvantaged groups may obtain from this approach. We will return to this question below.

In any case, my remit is to discuss possible course content itself, and I take that to mean courses which are possible here and now without a reform of the entire system in which we operate. My concern, moreover, is with practical benefits underprivileged groups may obtain within a reasonable time-span. The case for this perspective is twofold. From a political point of view, real change in the power relationship between citizens and authority is more likely to come from a strengthening of political capacity at the base than from a 'revolutionary' transformation at the top. From an educational point of view, knowledge and skills are more likely to be learnt where they can be translated into immediate action and bring immediate rewards.

I advocate an instrumental approach to political education which starts at the 'micro' rather than 'macro' levels of political activity, an emphasis on utilitarian skills rather than the great issues of politics. Since this is a reversal of traditional approaches, I shall start by indicating what I believe to be the weaknesses of the latter. If much of what follows appears negative, particularly the first section, it is to clear the ground for proposals which might otherwise seem only a betrayal of the 'great tradition'.

I shall not list ideal curricula. Since the argument is that political education should respond to the needs of potential client groups, such a catalogue would be counter-productive. If political education is to serve the community, it must respond flexibly to their varied interests rather than pursue its own image of what the well-educated man or woman should know. More practically, if adult education is to expand, it must sell its product to consumers: this means market research before product design.

This paper suggests an approach to political education which I believe to be best grounded educationally and which seems to me of the greatest political value. The combination of these two elements is central to the argument. It must be said, finally, that what follows is a personal expression of views.

Courses for citizens and the great issues of politics

If adult education is seen as a continuing broadening of the mind, self-development, then politics may legitimately be studied as a

humanities subject. A parallel may be drawn to university studies. There is no way of defining the content of politics degrees by reference to vocational needs. There used nevertheless to be a measure of agreement about the intellectual baggage a well-educated student should acquire, but even that is not very strong today. Political philosophy, political sociology, contemporary history, problems of the constitution, the politics of this part of the world or that the balance of topics depends a good deal on the lecturers' own interests. It probably does not matter very much what is studied so long as the mind develops and (sometimes forgotten by university teachers) a permanent interest is stimulated. On this view of adult political education there is little to be said about course contents, for any content that is intellectually rewarding will do.

Another way of looking at political education, however, is as civic education. Although contrary to British traditions, comprehensive systems are to be found in other democracies. Civic education was institutionalised in Germany after the last war. Aimed primarily at schools, though with a brief also for adults, it is to provide objective information about the political system so that (future) citizens may understand the nature of democracy and their place within it, learn how to participate themselves, acquire a spirit of tolerance as well as a critical stance.

While this sounds like the 'political literacy' programme developed by Bernard Crick and others in Britain, the German purpose was undoubtedly to create support for parliamentary democracy and the (newly) established constitutional order. In so far as influential politicians may be interested in promoting political education in Britain, it is as a counter to the defection of voters from the established parties and the resort of certain groups to forms of action outside the procedures of representative government. There is an obvious element of propaganda in this, but it is not ipso facto undesirable.

Since a programme of political education is not going to be compulsory, however, whether in schools or for adults, it is hard to see how it could reach a sufficiently large number of those who 'need' it to counter political ignorance — even if there was any guarantee that such instruction could turn apathetic (not to mention hostile) citizens into 'good democrats'. The small take-up of voluntary courses in relation to the total electorate means that such an approach is likely to remain marginal in effect.

The real danger is that such efforts will dissipate resources which could be used more effectively in other ways. Since an extensive programme of political education, whatever its purpose, will require state funding, however, it is perhaps sensible to include some element of 'education for democracy' in the curriculum, with some material on parliament, parties and elections.

The English tradition of adult political education has different roots from the German, particularly those in the Labour movement. Its original purpose was not to educate into the existing order but to strengthen the political capacity of the under-privileged. From an understanding of how our system operates, not just the constitution but the economic infrastructure of power, would come the ability to reform, even 'revolutionise', that system. The assumption underlying this tradition is that knowledge is power: that understanding (as in the motto of the London School of Economics "*rerum cognoscere causas*") is the key to political efficacy. I shall argue below that this was always a false hope.

There are still those in adult education who see it as a means of raising the consciousness of the politically weak: the working class, women, blacks. If this is to be its purpose, then its contents must be firmly rooted in political science, with an emphasis on power and the roots of power rather than constitutional arrangements or political philosophy. 'Women's studies' and 'Black studies' appear to have established themselves as academic subjects and there is no need to discuss contents in relation to specialised courses of this sort.

Just as civic education has no guaranteed access to the ignorant or apathetic, so education to mobilise the underprivileged has no guaranteed access to this clientele. One is likely to recruit 'cadres' already committed to the cause. It may be answered that the only way of reaching the 'masses' is through such cadres, who act as a leavening, spreading ideas to those whom political education cannot reach directly.

The fact remains that such courses are more likely to appeal if they provide participants with the intellectual ammunition to underpin the beliefs they already have. How far state-financed political education can go along this path is open to question. While raising the self-confidence of women or ethnic groups is generally acceptable, will the state fund 'leftist' groups that set out to challenge its basic assumptions? It is obvious that tutors may have a 'hidden agenda' at variance with officially accepted notions of liberal democracy but there seems little point in discussing what the contents of such courses might be. Their establishment depends on their agenda remaining hidden. Public advocacy of such an approach by its supporters would surely be counter-productive?

Finally, here, there is a view, sometimes linked to the 'great tradition', which seems to combine education for citizenship and personal development. We are told that political education should concern itself with the great political debates of our time and with the values that underlie the different policies on offer. This means an introduction to political philosophy as well as to political science. It is not always clear whether that purpose is primarily social: active

citizens capable of informed judgements about the issues of the day, or primarily individual: the student's personal satisfaction in understanding those issues. Underlying the great tradition, however, is the view that true democracy requires a politically literate citizenry. Since I later argue for a more instrumental approach, based on participation at less exalted levels, the possible focus on grander political questions should be mentioned.

In so far as such courses concern themselves with the major political controversies of the day, their contents will clearly change as different issues acquire salience. This fluidity makes it hard to plan in advance. Such courses raise another organisational problem. They lack educational coherence since they call on a wide range of disciplines to explain economic policy, defence policy, welfare policy.... A thin line divides the generalist tutor in current affairs from the amateur whose expertise goes no further than what is already offered the student in the quality press. It may be, however, that the unifying factor, the specifically 'political' element, can be grounded in political philosophy and the discussion of values.

What contribution such courses are likely to make to society is another matter. At the end of a discussion of economic policy, students may understand Keynesian, Friedmanite and Marxist theories better than before. This may give us better informed Conservative, Labour and Alliance voters — better citizens in that sense — but the political effect may be negligible. I suspect that tutors hope their students will come round to their way of thinking: not by propaganda but because 'truth will prevail'. Perhaps, however, there is no truth, certainly as regards value judgements; and if there is, history shows little evidence of its compelling force in politics. This is not to denigrate such an approach to political education, merely to put its 'cash value' into perspective compared to the more practical approach suggested below.

Whatever the broad aim of such programmes, the fact remains that adult political education will be available to only a small part of the population. Its audience will be largely self-selecting. In political terms, the chance is that courses will preach to those already converted. As regards personal development, enrolment will more often come from those already active intellectually. Good advertising may bring in some of the politically ignorant or apathetic, but a more likely result is that to those who have will be given while those who have not will be left without.

The conjunction of small numbers, self-selection from among those who already have some political education and the fact that participants' views are less likely to be shaped by the courses they attend than the many other influences to which they are subject, means that

the social effect of education for citizens is likely to be marginal. To that extent it is not the best investment of scarce resources.

One could, of course, visualise a system of continuing education which delivered a flow of students who need political education most: those who lack political knowledge and political skills and are therefore 'underprivileged' by comparison to sections of the population to whom these come naturally through schooling, family or profession. In so far as many of the underprivileged are apolitical to start with, hostile to further education because of their earlier schooling or simply unwilling to invest their own free time (and money) this way, a system of incentives would be required. A way might be found to integrate adult education in the latest version from the Manpower Services Commission of the job creation programme — the Community Programme — which is based on the principle that some of the take-up will be on a part-time basis, leaving a day free for further education provisions.

Educational doubts may nevertheless be raised about the value of broad-based courses designed to give a cross-section of citizens a better understanding of great political issues and the nature of the political system. People tend to learn what they want to learn. Whatever the content of courses, students will interpret it, accept it or reject it, in accordance with their own preconceived views. This is a common experience even at the university where the 'best' students, those who read most, often do their homework simply to find evidence that will support the line they wish to take in their essays.

Courses unrelated to practice, moreover, will not make students more effective participants in the political system. Knowledge as such is not power: power requires the will to act and action skills. Classes on political ideologies (the 'isms' of our time) or political issues (the controversial policies of the day) too often end as debating societies, sharpening the wits but unrelated to anything members will do when the class is over. Even macro-analysis of the political system is likely to remain somewhat abstract. What it may do, in relation to practice, is inform students about the limits which the power system puts on their action: but that does little to develop practical skills either. I am doubtful, therefore, about what such course can achieve in strengthening the political capacity of the underprivileged.

What more can one say about course contents? Either one responds to demands and matches course contents to what the class wants (and many tutors doubtless tend in this direction, if only to keep their audience) or one devises a balanced curriculum in the knowledge that many listeners will pick out what they want to hear and ignore the rest (a fact sadly obvious from the comments that follow lectures to even politically sophisticated groups). Courses designed to show all sides

of every question, ignoring the selective receptivity of students, involve lecturers in much unrewarded work.

Generalised education for citizenship can be about how the political system works (not only the governmental system but the economic complex underlying it) or about political issues. Designed for a cross-section of the population, it is directed, on the whole, to a better understanding of the system/issues. It is much harder to build in the development of practical skills. Since course participants may have little in common except the fact that they are voters, it is difficult to latch onto other more commonplace forms of political activity in the way that one can in role-oriented courses.

Traditional forms of political education rely for their audience on those who happen to be interested in politics and attract a small, somewhat random clientele, largely because there is no immediate pay-off for participants. Their motive for enrolment may simply be 'intellectual'. Continuing education is coming to be accepted as a desirable cause. For the moment, however, it is no more than a cause; provisions of this sort, especially in times of financial constraint, are likely to remain as marginal as they are random. That does not mean such students should be neglected. In so far as this means something closer to a humanities education than education for citizenship, the content may not matter very much so long as it is academically respectable. While such courses may be designed with an eye to what the informed citizen of a democracy should know, not much is lost to democracy by catering for the interests actually expressed by participants — and a good deal is gained educationally.

On the whole, the interest of non-vocational participants appears to lie in political issues rather than in the operation of the political system as such. True, there may be some interest in current debates about the organisation of government (e.g. electoral reform, devolution, a Bill of Rights). Since there is a non-academic market for books of a marxist persuasion on politics, there may also be a self-selecting audience for such courses, though it is doubtful whether this is one much in need of adult education provisions to supplement its other reading.

If interest centres on the policies of government and the discussion of alternative solutions to contemporary problems, we have another difficulty in course design. While policies are undoubtedly the stuff of politics, their substance does not fall within the study of politics defined as a discipline. Economic theories require economists for their elucidation, and so on. If political education is equated with 'current affairs', then its menu can only be composed by reference to current debates and its range of dishes may require cooks trained in a variety of disciplines.

Courses for role groups and practical skills

We have discussed so far courses for cross-sections of the public (in intent if not in take-up) with very broad (almost intangible) aims. The alternative is role-oriented education, laid on for specific groups engaged in some form of political activity, the contents designed to meet the needs of the groups in question. The argument here is that role education has few disadvantages of the sort discussed above and that its merits far outweigh those of more generalised programmes.

We live in an increasingly administered society and it is increasingly important for groups to understand the politico-administrative system in which they have to operate. This is particularly true as more and more groups emerge by the side of traditional interest organisations: community associations, tenants' associations, environmental groups, parents' groups.... Many of these are at a disadvantage in dealing with authorities compared to older-established bodies because their members lack the information base/operating skills which come naturally to middle-class organisers.

There are many arguments, therefore, for concentrating on role-oriented political education through the intermediary of this newly emerging network of groups. They constitute a clientele that is already organised, which simplifies the problem of 'selling' political education and avoids the somewhat random take-up of courses advertised to the public at large. If course contents are geared to the needs of specific groups, there is also a more obvious incentive to participation. At the same time, courses related to the everyday activities of such groups are likely to be more effective educationally because of their link to immediate interests and because the information acquired can immediately be translated into action. We shall return to these points below.

A persuasive case can also be made for the state to fund such programmes. Many groups play an important part in public life (in local planning, housing and schools, for example) and public life would benefit if their efficiency was raised (smoother relations with public authorities, better decisions by public authorities....). The case is even stronger in the light of the recent Toxteth events. If one wants to avoid the sense of alienation which some of these groups have, often leading to disruptive activities, then political role education may help develop the skills required for participatory democracy. (Participatory democracy is, of course, a two-way process and the police, for example, require as much political education as community groups).

We have noted that role education caters for groups defined by the activities in which they are engaged and is designed to meet their specific needs. Because it is instrumental in character, it does not rely on some vague interest in politics but will obtain an audience in so far

as it serves those needs. While the situation might be different if we had a comprehensive system of continuing education, it is in role education that the real market for adult political education would currently seem to lie.

Role-oriented, instrumental education is also more likely to be educationally effective than generalised education for citizenship. The motive for learning is greater. The material studied is directly related to the activities of those concerned and thus more easily understood. Practical experience throws light on theoretical knowledge, adding new perspectives; as theory is tested against practice and often found inadequate, correction can take place. Finally, because the information can be immediately used, knowledge is more easily internalised (a problem with school learning and some forms of adult education is the time gap between classroom study and the possibility of applying the knowledge so acquired). The Chinese proverb says: 'I hear and I forget, I see and I understand, I do and I remember'. One could also quote the English proverb: 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating'. The recipes of political education, like those of cookery classes, should relate to puddings which can actually be cooked, eaten and judged. This is not the place to discuss theories of learning, but its links with practice clearly put role education into a very different position from education for citizenship.

One form of role education may overlap with education for citizenship, namely courses for political activists. Activists may well be interested in a more theoretical analysis of the political system and in the study of political ideas. They do not want 'neutral' courses, however, but courses oriented to their own political beliefs and related to the movements in which they are involved. There is a market here, but one that would cause problems if a state-funded system went too far in meeting it. For a variety of reasons the left of the Left tends to be more 'intellectual' than the Centre or the Right, so one could end up (some believe we already do) with a bias towards courses of a marxist character — plus black studies and women's studies. There is, however, much to be said for courses designed for groups which share a common political viewpoint: it allows for serious study without the distraction caused by slanging-match polemics.

This is doubtless a heretical view, contrary to the pluralist tradition of political education with its emphasis on seeing all sides of an issue. Have we not, however, sat through too many discussion groups which have degenerated into political debates for which the course tutor could himself have written everyone's script in advance? And what do students learn from such debates except debating skills? Since all the evidence seems to be that people's political views are shaped by a complex of environmental and personal factors, and are hardly influenced at all by the process of education, much less by political

debate, closed-group courses may well be more productive. Courses for local councillors, for example, are more likely to get down to serious work if they can take party affiliations for granted and are not tempted to treat the classroom as an extension of the council chamber.

Political activists may be thought of as role groups and targets for the more generalised sort of political education (political issues and all that) discussed in the preceding section. If (and it is only an 'if') they are the political leaven in our system, then they may offer a better way of increasing political knowledge in society than the rather random participation open courses obtain. One would naturally have to ensure that a balanced spread of closed courses is offered: courses for the Left, the Centre and the Right....

Let us return to role education proper and to definitions. The adjective 'political' can be applied to role-oriented education in two ways: to the groups themselves (i.e. those exercising functions in the governmental system such as councillors); and to the subject matter of the courses, where the groups themselves may not be primarily political but could benefit from information about politics (e.g. voluntary associations). It is impossible to draw a clear line between political and non-political groups in practice: school governors play a role in the government of education, environmental bodies are involved in local planning, most voluntary associations depend on state grants, shop stewards are engaged in politics in the industrial system. The conceptual distinction nevertheless underlines the ambiguity of the term political role education. It is sometimes applied to those for whom the education is intended, sometimes for the contents of that education.

It may be said that this distinction can be ignored because we need not limit ourselves to groups whose primary *raison d'être* is political. It does, however, link with a more serious ambiguity about the content of courses in political education — and that is our topic here. Those playing clearly political roles probably know as much about practical, everyday politics as adult education tutors. They are more likely to want information about a whole range of matters which are not really political at all. Councillors, for example, need to learn about financial management, personnel management and similar technical subjects. The same is true for those organisations which are not primarily political. At some point they require information about how the political system operates: community group leaders, for example, should understand the structure of (local) government, where political and bureaucratic power lies and how decisions are made; they need practical skills which will enable them to intervene effectively in that process. They also require a host of other skills, some general (e.g. management techniques), others drawn from a varied range of disciplines: trade unionists need to know about industrial law,

magistrates about penology, housing associations about finance, school governors about teaching practice, residents' groups about planning.

If political role players are the target, therefore, relatively little of the substance of courses required may fall into the field of political studies as usually understood. This is only to repeat that course providers cannot draw on a coherent body of knowledge as a starting point for course design. This has organisational implications which go beyond the scope of a paper on the future of political education. It may be tempting to leave such provision to others (though I believe this would be wrong unless we can be sure that others are actively concerned) and to concentrate instead on courses which do have a 'political' character.

Unfortunately, this also raises problems of definition which need a mention, if only to clarify our minds. Course contents can be political in two ways. First, information about how the political system operates and skills in operating that system. This is the 'disciplinary' approach: the subject matter of political education is grounded in political science and falls within the professional competence of politics teachers. Second, the stuff of politics — policy issues. Most of the information required here is drawn from other disciplines. What these policy fields have in common is simply that they are the subject of political controversy. Since different groups will be involved with different policy fields, there is no ready made check-list, no set curriculum that would meet their varied interests.

A strong argument can be made that what most groups require, especially those not drawn from the relatively well-educated, well-connected middle class, is education for political skills as in the first definition above. To promote their interests, they need to understand how the political-administrative system operates and how to operate within it themselves.

It seems, however, that more often they really want to discuss policy issues as in the second definition: what sort of an educational system should we have, how effective are different sentencing policies in dealing with crime, how can unemployment be cured or the inner cities regenerated....? This may be a mistaken sense of priorities on their part, a recipe for talk rather than action, since most are not likely to influence policy-making at this level directly. Where groups have decision-making powers, however, or an immediate influence on policy-makers, there is a good case for policy analysis.

There may nevertheless be a temptation to overshoot. Tutors, even if they see themselves as more practical than their ivory-tower university colleagues, have a professional interest in ideas. Students may find it more relaxing to talk about ideas which make no immediate

action demands on them. The discussion of alternative policies, in other words, often remains an 'academic' exercise. This is not only a waste of educational resources which could be better directed to immediately useful skills but (as suggested earlier) may also be educationally ineffective. That said, the fact remains that we are in a market situation. There is no captive audience for adult political education. If courses are to be designed for specific groups, their content will have to reflect their interests. In practice, therefore, they will have to contain as much about the stuff of politics as about the political process itself.

Let me now turn to the case for a more practical education in politics. In what follows I originally had in mind courses for young people for whom provision might be made within the framework of the Youth Opportunities Programme (though current government views are entirely hostile). The way into political education for adults seems to me the same, however, and the links with role-oriented education will follow.

The advocates of 'political literacy' want citizens to understand the great matters of politics, the arguments about the different 'isms' of the modern world, the current issues of party politics, international affairs and much more. For many people all this may seem rather irrelevant. They are likely to take the policies of government, like the weather, as something which they know they cannot alter. One can tell them that if they understand the issues and how the system works they will be able to participate in politics and thus influence policies in the longer run. They are shrewd enough to realise that this is unlikely. Even 'mass' movements have remarkably little effect on the present government, while its replacement is more likely to depend on changing economic factors beyond the voters' control than on any mobilisation of voters through education. They are also shrewd enough to realise that talk about long-term influences on government policy is often a blind for their teachers' lack of know-how in helping them cope with their immediate problems.

What ordinary people really need is an umbrella to protect them against the rain of government policies. What may interest them, in other words, is learning how to operate within the system: how to protect their rights, for example, and how to deal with the officials who implement existing policies. We should not be fatalists, but a degree of fatalism is a sounder basis for action than concentration on things beyond one's control. Though people are often rightly angry about government policies, they tend to take these as acts of God, or acts of the devil, and worry rather more about the application of policies to their own particular situation. If people believe that present levels of unemployment are beyond the control even of governments, as opinion polls show they do, they may find political education more

realistic if it discusses economic theories rather less and spends more time on ways of protecting oneself against its worst effects (courses on welfare rights and all that).

Public administration is in many ways more relevant to the ordinary citizen than party politics. It is a truism to say that we are increasingly administered, subject to ever more government regulations, dependent on public authorities for ever more services. It is no less a truism to say that we must know the 'who, how and why' of the decisions that affect us if we are not to get lost in the mazes of bureaucracy. The man or woman in the street has only the haziest notions of the administrative system which implements policies — often with considerable powers of discretion. It is not just that people are frequently ignorant of their rights; even when they know them, they often have no idea where to find the officials on whom their rights depend, hidden as they are in a bewildering complex of offices.

A geography of administration, taking in local political institutions, can usefully be taught. When I was at school Civics meant who empties the dustbins. The subject became discredited as boring and politically unreal. The fashionable denigration of the institutional approach to political studies overlooks the fact that ordinary people need to know where to complain if their dustbins are not emptied. A modernised study of the administrative system is more necessary today than it ever was. People also need to know the law if, for example, they are to obtain the benefits to which they are entitled. Law should form a central part of any political education intended to help ordinary people defend their interests. Apart from ensuring some degree of equality between the two sides of the counter, strengthening citizen competence is probably the best way of ensuring that bureaucrats improve their own standards of conduct.

From this, one would go on to knowledge of how one sets about influencing the wider (but still local) decisions that affect the groups to which individuals belong. This naturally involves an understanding of political behaviour and political power — thus the study of politics generally. The way in, however, is instrumental. This is a crucial point. One starts with immediately useful knowledge, techniques of political action, bringing in theory to explain the possibilities — and limits — of action, rather than starting with comprehensive theories about the political system as academics are inclined to do.

At this stage it is perhaps a matter of presentation rather than contents, but presentation is important. It must be geared to the needs of the groups concerned rather than to some grander notion that the politically aware citizen should understand the national, even international, complex. Properly handled, it should be possible to move in this way from a 'micro' to a 'macro' analysis of politics without isolating the subject from the everyday life of participants. I repeat, however, that I

regard this as the second stage of political education and that the first, more important, stage is practical information about how to operate within the system.

The focus suggested above seems not only more useful than many other proposals for political education but also more viable educationally. This, too, is a crucial point. Education with a practical bias is more likely to be understood because being nearer the participants' own experience it is: more likely to seem relevant and thus arouse the interest of those otherwise uninterested in politics; more likely to be internalised and remembered because linked to personal involvement in the political-administrative process. If the choice is between grander politics and humbler public administration plus immediately applicable political skills, there is much to be said for the latter.

I know the counter-argument. It will be charged that, however laudable the intention, teaching people to operate within the system is effectively manipulating them into acceptance of the status quo: a reactionary doctrine. I believe the opposite to be true. If the less privileged groups in our society acquire some of the practical knowledge and practical skills which come naturally to better educated and more widely experienced middle class, they will be able to defend their interests more effectively and society may undergo a real transformation.

It is true, of course, that there are limits to what underprivileged groups can achieve even if their political capacity is raised in this way. Sooner or later they hit barriers set by the power structures of the existing political order. Critics will use this as another argument for concentrating on analysis of the political system as a whole rather than on what is possible within it. They have a point, but they also betray a certain élitism. To quote yet another proverb, for ordinary people a bird in the hand is often worth two in the bush. Those who wish to divert students' attention to long-term political goals probably already possess a bird or two and can afford the luxury of chasing those in the bush.

It is also worth remembering that past revolutionary changes throughout the world have only replaced one set of masters by another. The politically conscious vanguard of teachers that wants to talk about transformation of the political system may unconsciously see itself as part of the new élite. A real change in the power structure of society will only occur, however, when ordinary people have the political skills to defend themselves against authority, whatever its complexion may be. These skills can only be learnt in their everyday lives.

The argument made above applies also to role-oriented courses for specialised groups. Some will need such political education more than

others. Associations like conservation societies probably have sufficient middle class know-how and professional expertise. Some community groups include experienced political activists, others have learnt from experience. The fact remains that the bureaucratic system with which they have to contend is very complex; so are many of the regulations with which they have to cope.

Political skills, moreover, are more sophisticated than newcomers to the political scene may believe. Many groups get drawn into political actions which turn out to be counter-productive to their own interests: sometimes, it is true, because their leaders have other purposes in mind than immediate benefits, but sometimes simply because they do not understand how the political system operates. There is thus a strong case for including in role-oriented courses not only a discussion of relevant policy issues but more technical matters relating to law, public administration and political behaviour at the grassroot level.

The balance of the foregoing discussion is that practically-oriented role education offers a better return than education for citizenship with grander hopes. This may seem pessimistic. Perhaps one should 'temper pessimism of the intellect by optimism of the will' and press on, using whatever possibilities are open to adult education, in the hope that all bread cast on the waters will eventually lead to some returns. If one is to argue for state subsidies, moreover, government and parties may be persuaded of the value of 'citizenship' courses designed to win apathetic electors back to representative democracy. The fact remains, however, that there are now so many competing leisure possibilities that adult education which does not offer participants immediate benefits seems unlikely to appeal to more than a small minority — and that minority is not necessarily composed of those who need it most politically.

There are better market prospects where political education has something immediately useful to offer. Planning its contents is dangerous, however. Just as the state may wish to promote the political education that will serve its interests best, so providers of political education may fall into the trap of trying to sell what they believe the public should have. I accept that the professional integrity of politics teachers makes them want to teach others what they themselves believe to be the important truths of politics, but too great a virtue is often made of what is really a vice: the self-indulgence of tutors who want to talk about what interests them. This natural inclination of intellectuals is an additional reason for self-restraint in the discussion about curriculum design.

One of the faults of British industry was that it tried too long to sell what industrialists wanted to produce rather than what customers wanted to buy. It lost markets as a result. In other words, instead of looking at the supply side and its aims, we should look at the demand

side and its self-perceived needs. It lies in the nature of a market-oriented system that one cannot plan output except by reference to existing and potential market demand. I am not making a value judgement here about the desirability of the market as a way of allocating resources. I am simply starting from the assumption that the government is not going to alter the entire educational system of the country right now (by the introduction of a comprehensive system of paid study-leave, for example), so that proposals for the extension of adult political education must start from potential demand within the existing system.

Market surveys can give one a fair indication of the potential for a new product. One need not, however, react entirely on an ad hoc basis to demands currently expressed. Just as producers influence the market through advertising, so we can hope to influence the market through reasoned discussion with potential client groups.

The first stage of any practical extension of adult political education must be the identification of those groups that could benefit from what it has to offer. Adult education already has many such contacts but they need to be systematised: check-lists of potential groups in each area should be produced and meetings with them arranged. These meetings should not be seen as a way of sounding out potential clients for courses then advertised to the public at large, the responsibility, in the last resort, of the educational institutions concerned. 'Course contracts' with individual groups are more likely to stimulate interest and ensure take-up.

Second, there is the design of the product to be sold to customers whose interest has been aroused in this way. We can discuss among ourselves what sort of role-oriented political education would be useful to different groups. We can try to persuade them that they need more practical information about how the political-administrative system works at their level and that they need more practical political skills. Since I believe this to be the major contribution political education can make, I am bound to believe that some reasoned persuasion along these lines is desirable.

In the end, however, one must offer what is wanted. I have already voiced my suspicion that it is courses on interest-related issues that most groups want rather than the more technical aspects of public administration and local politics. The particular policy fields they wish to examine will vary from group to group and from year to year. In meeting this demand, tutors may be able to arouse interest in the more practical aspects of political action by showing the pay-off this approach may bring. Much will depend on the tutors, on the extent to which they can help identify what a particular group may find useful and on the extent to which they themselves possess the skills required.

Again, it is not a question of planning ideal courses in advance but a question of getting in and adapting to needs.

A keyword, therefore, is flexibility in the content of the course. This may be difficult to organise. It certainly does not fit the practice of producing an annual programme of courses in the hope that sufficient participants will come forward. I know that programmes are planned after sounding out potential interest, but the result is still relatively rigid compared to what I advocate here. Servicing groups requires a stock of tutors who are not committed in advance to a course timetable but can come in as called for and teach what is asked for, where and when it is wanted, on something like a 'contractual' basis.

This aspect of flexibility further complicates organisation. One of the faults of the British export industry has been its weakness in selling where the customer is: too often it has expected customers to come to it. Much of adult education is institutionally based and expects customers to attend its premises, even if it generally works from dispersed locations. Many groups will be more receptive, however, if political education is provided for them on their own home ground. This is particularly true of those underprivileged sections of the community whose bad memories of school make them reluctant to attend courses in any building associated with education. If those most in need of political education are reluctant to come to the tutors' normal place of work, then the tutors must go to theirs. A major shift to 'outreach' adult education is required.

A final note of optimism. Whether issue-focussed or focussed on politics proper, courses of the sort I have suggested should increase the effectiveness of the multitude of groups which form an essential part of a democratic society. Though strengthening such groups may at first be seen by politicians and bureaucrats as a challenge to their authority, it will actually make the governmental process itself more effective. It is on these lines, rather than by some vague appeals about educating citizens for democracy, that the case for public funding of political education can best be made.



Chapter Three

EXISTING PROVISION AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS

by William Hampton

One of the many problems associated with adult political education is the definition to be given to the concept. Professor Ridley has already commented on this problem but it continues to be a difficulty as we approach a discussion of existing provision and possible new developments. In a survey conducted for the Universities' Council for Adult and Continuing Education (UCACE) working party, I distinguished three types of educational provision for adults interested either in participating in public life or in gaining an understanding of public issues. In this chapter, after outlining the general findings of the UCACE survey, I refine the typology as a basis for a discussion of developments either already taking place or which might be considered as practical next steps in encouraging adult education in this field.

Adult education for participation in public, or political matters, takes place through a wide range of agencies. In this it is no different from other forms of adult learning. We speak to neighbours or colleagues at work; listen to the radio or watch television; read newspapers; and join organisations ranging from political parties and trade unions to squash or gardening clubs. In all these ways we gain an understanding of both public policies and political processes — the manner in which decisions are taken in the light of conflicting pressures and opinions. Adult educators may intervene at many points in this process; some of these are considered later in this chapter and others in subsequent chapters. For the present I confine that consideration to the more formal provision made by specifically educational agencies.

TABLE 1: CATEGORIES OF PROVISION

<i>Agencies providing "educational activities to assist...."</i>	<i>N=131</i>
	%
General education on participation or citizenship	79
Role education	89
(Role education excluding "trade union" courses	71)
Education concerned with public issues	72
Other	25

The UCACE working party survey included all local educational authorities in Great Britain, Workers' Educational Association districts,

universities and polytechnics, and some Scottish colleges of further education.⁽⁶⁾ One hundred and ninety-one agencies (84%) completed a postal questionnaire and of these 131 (69%) provided "*educational activities to assist people to participate in public affairs or to understand and discuss public issues*". The agencies were asked to distinguish these activities into a three-fold classification with the results shown in Table 1.

The results immediately show some of the problems arising in attempting to classify adult education for participation in public affairs. First, the 'other' category includes some agencies which wanted to include courses for basic literacy. Not only is literacy an obvious advantage for anyone wishing to participate in public life, but many of the courses use teaching material relating to public affairs. Indeed, the point is well-taken that *any* form of education can help to develop the self-confidence and skills that enable a person to participate more effectively. Surveys of participants in many forms of public activity have consistently shown a relationship between the level of activity and the extent of a person's formal education. Second, the extension of courses for trade unionists over the past 10–15 years has made a major contribution to adult education for a section of the population seldom prominent in more traditional adult education provision. Courses are provided for shop stewards and health and safety representatives with the active involvement of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) Education Department. Public funds are available to support these courses. Though not directly 'political' in a narrow sense, the courses are certainly concerned with public issues and teach skills specifically relevant for participation in public affairs. Skills such as public speaking and note taking, an understanding of committee procedure and elementary book-keeping, can all be important in enabling a person to take part in public activities. Perhaps, to put it the other way round, a lack of these skills inhibits many people from getting involved. So, too, does the lack of confidence which affects people used to a subordinate position either at work or in social and family life. The 'assertiveness training' provided by some women's groups is intended to overcome such hesitancy and in this sense is a form of 'political education': similar objectives are part of the 'hidden curriculum' of many trade union and other role preparation courses.

However, I return to educational activities more specifically related to politics. The courses of general education mentioned in Table 1 cover a wide spectrum from introductory courses in government or politics to courses concerned with citizens' legal or welfare rights. A number of agencies mentioned courses associated with a BBC radio series *What right have you got?* Other courses were concerned with local government: sometimes with distinctly activist titles such as *Influencing local government*. These courses sometimes invited

councillors or local government officers to contribute to the teaching thus bringing the whiff of reality into the academic halls. A few agencies approached the teaching of local government in an unstructured manner: community workers stimulated interest among local community organisations. One local authority described a successful community association of four hundred members in an area judged to need special educational help. The education was achieved through the experience of working within the association rather than by formal courses: the role of the community worker was to highlight and reinforce the learning opportunities which arose. In addition to gaining knowledge about local government in general, the activities of the association led to an exploration of several environmental and health issues.

Despite the many examples that can be quoted, such general adult education provision on political topics is neither common nor well-supported. A few relevant courses or community activities are swamped by the hundreds or thousands of other courses that make up a typical adult education programme: in many places there is no provision at all. Agencies cannot be blamed for the lack of interest in general political education: student numbers are low; the demand does not manifest itself as actively as it does for recreational courses or for such staples as literature or local history. Agencies may be more culpable, however, in not pursuing diligently enough other ways of presenting material essential to a healthy democracy; but this is an argument we must leave to later.

Most agencies make some provision within the second category: educational help for people undertaking various participatory roles within society. The range of roles provided for by any single agency is not usually very wide — only the trade union courses have a reasonably widespread distribution — but courses are provided for magistrates, for Children's Panels members in Scotland, for councillors, for school governors, and for many less formal roles in voluntary organisations. Magistrates and Children's Panels members must attend as a condition of their appointment. For the rest it is a hit or miss affair, some areas and roles being much better provided for than others. Where courses are available, the response is often very encouraging, and sometimes embarrassing. I have been faced as a tutor with seventy school governors crammed into a small school library. Recent legislation enlarges the number of school governors in many areas and will undoubtedly open up many educational opportunities.

Compared with the provision for magistrates, members of Children's Panels and school governors, little is provided by educational agencies for local authority or community health councillors. The councillors are busy people, and in any case there are difficult

questions of status and role. Can a tutor who is not an elected member teach those who are? Many councillors have doubts. Nonetheless, educational conferences on specific topics can prove successful. More general events are usually only supported when the councillors are newly elected. In 1978, for example, two-day introductory conferences were provided for newly elected councillors in several London Boroughs. The success of this venture depended on close co-operation with a group of experienced councillors and a team of very experienced and well-qualified tutors.⁽⁷⁾

The third category, of political issues, can span a spectrum from rape to nuclear energy; from housing subsidies to relations with the Soviet Union or the Argentine; or from the building of a motorway extension to the closure of a nursery school. It all depends on the salience of the subject at a particular time and on the need for public bodies to make some decision with regard to the matter. Many people's interests are stimulated by public controversy, and this provides an opportunity for adult educators: it also provides potential pitfalls as education enters the realm of political conflict. One WEA course on *The future of Sunderland* led to questions in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords and to a major local controversy. From the same WEA district came a rather different example of 'issue education'. Several months were spent in arranging a one-day conference on *Open cast mineral extraction*, for which a booklet of papers was produced by representatives of the extractive industry, the National Coal Board, a former chairman of the Peak Planning Board, and a landscape architect. In this case the adult education agency was providing a forum for the public discussion of the issue rather than a course providing technical background and an assessment of policy choices.

So far I have limited my remarks to mainstream agencies of adult education; but many others contribute to informing and educating the public about public affairs. In particular broadcasting is the most important source of daily information for most people and has a specifically educational commitment. Professor Groombridge has outlined some prospects for television in a participatory society, drawing on examples mainly from North America.⁽⁸⁾ The evidence from these examples of elaborate collaboration between the media and adult education agencies "*inspires confidence that the requirements of depth (of understanding) can be reconciled with the requirements of scale (numbers, representatives and location) in the interests of better democracy*".⁽⁹⁾ Little has been achieved, or attempted, on this scale in Britain, but the inauguration of Channel Four television provides opportunities for new developments.

Local radio has a clear educational component in many areas and the concentration on local people and issues makes its general programmes a stimulating source of information. Several writers,

including Groombridge and Lovett,⁽¹⁰⁾ have stressed the potential of local radio as a medium of adult education about political and community matters. Unfortunately, a recent survey has found "*the reality has been rather disappointing in both the quantity and quality of local radio's engagement with civic affairs*".⁽¹¹⁾ Once again, there is a need for fresh initiatives both from broadcasters and educators to build upon the potential and occasional successes of local radio.

The dissemination of good practice is always worthwhile and plenty of excellent opportunities exist for expanding all types of adult education in political matters as elsewhere. We must recognise, however, that at present educational provision for those adults who want to learn more about public events or to be more active in political affairs is neither widespread nor well-supported. In the second part of this chapter I consider the reasons for this and point to some developments which may help to overcome some of the problems that undoubtedly exist.

Let us return to problems of definitions and conceptual understanding. First, who participates in public life and who does not? And, second, into what form of public life are they invited or seeking to enter?

The answer to the first question is well known: people interested in political or public affairs are disproportionately male, middle-aged, and middle-class; they are home-owners, well-educated, and members of voluntary organisations; they are predominantly white.

The answer to the second question raises issues which are investigated and discussed less frequently, but which are critically important for the extension of political education either in content or in audience. Put crudely, we may be concerned either with presenting the opportunities available in existing political institutions and policies, or with showing the alternatives to these and consequently raising the possibility of conflict or change. Of course, a good teacher is expected to do both, but the potential pitfalls are less obvious when teaching subjects less inherently contentious than politics. Politics, after all, is concerned with the reconciliation of partial truths: though the partiality, in either nuance of meaning, is not always recognised by practitioners — or by teachers.

The approach undertaken in considering this second question affects attitudes to the first. If one is concerned with the apparent lack of interest shown by many people in political affairs or public issues, then one may *either* believe the answer lies in more information and education about existing structures *or* decide to change the existing arrangements to conform more closely with people's expectations and aspirations. Such an approach will not be welcomed by those benefiting from the status quo. Together with some colleagues, I spent

many years examining the implementation of the statutory provisions for public participation in local authority planning procedures. In the end we concluded that a widespread extension of involvement would not occur without institutional and political change.⁽¹²⁾ We were not surprised by the silence that greeted these conclusions. After a wider survey of local public services, we were similarly cautious in assessing other provisions for public participation that have developed over the past decade.⁽¹³⁾

If we reverse the answer to our first question, we can show that people who are absent from the political process *and* from most forms of political education are drawn disproportionately from the female, young, working-class, and black sections of the population. The significance of these conclusions is mentioned in several places in this report, but a few words about the critical case (in the scientific meaning of the phrase) of women in this respect may serve to illuminate the general point. Women constitute over half the population but are seldom found in positions of power or influence in political or public life. The causes are deep-rooted in our society and it is impossible to argue that education alone can do much to correct such a gross discrepancy. Indeed, the point has been recognised by feminists for nearly two centuries. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote "*till society be differently constituted, much cannot be expected from education*".⁽¹⁴⁾

The organisation of society and its political structure is not a neutral, ideal state into which all sections of the population can enter on equal terms. Rather is it a social construct which recognises the hegemony of precisely those groups of people whom we have noted as being most visible in the political process: male, middle-aged, middle-class, and white. As John Stuart Mill reminded us "*A person must have a very unusual taste for intellectual exercise in and for itself, who will put himself to the trouble of thought when it is to have no outward effect, or qualify himself for functions which he has no chance of being allowed to exercise.*"⁽¹⁵⁾ Mill, of course, was not concerned at that point with the possibility of a vicious dictatorship: he was criticising the idea of a "*good despot*". Benevolence, or good intentions, are no substitute for a democracy based upon a more open involvement by wider sections of society. On the other hand, if educationalists — or their students — develop a critical and active involvement and seek to change existing arrangements then 'trouble' may occur. The fear of this was in the minds of several local authority adult educators to whom I spoke during my research for the UCACE working party. Several preferred to leave such 'dangerous' aspects of the subject to the WEA and university extra-mural departments.

These theoretical considerations have led me to reconsider the analysis with which I started my empirical work for the UCACE working

party.⁽¹⁶⁾ I present this refined categorisation in Table 2. Within each of the original three categories I have distinguished the approaches of what, for reasons of brevity, I have termed 'maintenance' and 'challenge' adult education.⁽¹⁷⁾ 'Maintenance' adult education operates (for the purpose of my present distinction and definition) within the existing political framework; 'challenge' adult education is sceptical of present assumptions and structures. I have added a phrase beneath each of the new categories to explain the differences I would expect to occur in the adult education provided from the two different perspectives.

TABLE 2: AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL EDUCATION

(1) General education		(2) Role education		(3) Issue education	
'Maintenance'	'Challenge'	'Maintenance'	'Challenge'	'Maintenance'	'Challenge'
(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
Academic rather than activist	Activist rather than academic	Roles exercising power	Roles contesting power	Information and balanced viewpoints	Education in association with pressure groups

A couple of examples from my recent experience emphasise that the distinction I am making is not only — or even mainly — concerned with *what* we teach: more significant often is the context within which we are operating. My first example is of general education. I was approached by the Social Democratic Party to put on a course in local government for their candidates in forthcoming local elections (category 1b in Table 2). Many of the candidates were new to politics and there could have been *educational* advantages in dealing with their needs in the security of a closed group away from the undertones of party conflict that are inevitable in an open class. I was cautious; I invited them to an open course which I later organised (category 1a with links to 1b).

My second example is more complex. A group of Labour Party school governors wished to challenge the professional advice they were receiving in favour of streaming in secondary schools (category 2b). They asked if I could arrange for a teacher with experience of mixed ability teaching to explain the various concepts — and jargon! — involved, and to introduce them to experience and practice elsewhere. The session would have to be closed as they wished to ask questions, raise doubts, and discuss amongst themselves, without the possibility of their developing views being quoted at them during a subsequent policy-making debate. Once again, I was cautious. I arranged for a personal friend to take the session on an informal basis. It did not appear on our official programme, although nothing he had said at the session would have been out of place in either initial or post-experience teacher training. Later the governors asked if my

friend would accompany them to a full governors' meeting to ensure that evidence in favour of mixed ability teaching was available to all governors. He refused; his position as a teacher employed in another local education authority made the suggestion too institutionally and professionally sensitive.

Both these cases relate to educational work with active politicians and with the educational ethics of closed groups. These are, of course, illustrative of only some of the problems that can arise in any movement towards 'challenge' adult education in political matters. They show, however, the sensitivity that is aroused even in providing 'academic' material in a non-traditional setting. If we move further towards a community development approach then the sensitivity becomes public controversy.⁽¹⁸⁾ If we then question a structure of society that excludes, 'de facto' if not 'de jure', sections of the population from political involvement then we are met with either a denial that such exclusion exists or a fear of change resulting in open hostility.⁽¹⁹⁾

Adult education shares some of these problems with all forms of community work,⁽²⁰⁾ but some are accentuated by the particular expectations of balance and neutrality customarily, if often unrealistically, placed upon educationalists.⁽²¹⁾ They lead adult educators to be wary of initiation or even of responding to unusual developments in the broad field of education about political processes and policies. There are, of course, many opportunities for developing 'maintenance' adult education in these subjects. Role education, for example, for people exercising some form of power as elected councillors, as school governors, as community health councillors, or elsewhere in the political-administrative process could benefit from the sustained attention accorded to magistrates and Children's Panels members. Again, some form of multi-media course leading to a qualification in the mode of the *Living decisions* radio course might make a breakthrough in general political education. But despite such possibilities, large-scale developments will, in my view, only follow a shift to 'challenge' adult education methods. Adult educators need, therefore, to develop their understanding of the problems facing different sections of society in entering the political process; to form links with pressure groups at both a local and national level; and to provide initial and in-service training for staff who will face the special demands of effective political education for adults. It is a largely untilled field, and one with many rocks for the unwary ploughman, but the importance of the potential harvest of a better informed and more active policy is one which few democrats would deny.

Chapter Four

THE PROBLEMS OF PROVISION: A LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY VIEW

by Peter Clyne

Local education authorities can only operate within the existing law. In terms of political education, as with any other form of adult education, local education authorities are limited by the requirements of the Education Act 1944, and subsequent Regulations. The general conditions relating to the provision of adult education are contained primarily in Sections 41 and 42 of the 1944 Act.

Section 41 states: *"Subject as hereinafter provided, it shall be the duty of every Local Education Authority to secure the provision for their area of adequate facilities for further education, that is to say: (a) full-time and part-time education for persons over compulsory school age; and (b) leisure-time occupation in such organised cultural, training and recreative activities as are suited to their requirements, for any persons over compulsory school age who are able and willing to profit by the facilities provided for that purpose;"*

Section 42 states in Sub-Section 4: *"a Local Education Authority shall, when preparing any scheme of further education, have regard to any facilities for further education provided for their area by Universities, Educational Associations, and other bodies, and shall consult any such bodies as aforesaid and the Local Education Authorities for adjacent areas;"*

Therefore, a local education authority can either make direct provision of education for adults or, indirectly, through financial support or encouragement to other agencies, assist towards indirect provision of educational opportunities for adults. Those educational establishments which are directly maintained by the local education authorities must be seen to be operating within the policies and procedures of those authorities and to the general satisfaction of the District Auditor as to the dispersal of public money. Aided establishments are independent educational establishments financially supported, to a varying extent, to enable provision of education to be made for the population. The procedures and practices of the independent individual organisation are those which will condition and guide the provision of education but, in so far as the establishment is dependent in part on public moneys provided by the local education authority, it is inevitable that the policies, practices and procedures of the establishment are, to a considerable degree, influenced by, and indeed to some extent determined by, the local education authorities concerned. The third way in which local education authorities can seek

to ensure that educational opportunities for adults are appropriately provided is to give support to voluntary organisations within their areas. Local education authorities are enabled by the legislation to offer financial support to voluntary organisations to provide education for adults. In many cases it would be appropriate for a voluntary organisation to be seen to be providing educational programmes which, in so far as they do not feature in the normal programmes of the education authorities concerned, would not otherwise be provided but, by being provided by the voluntary organisation, are seen to be complementing the provision by the statutory authority.

Responsible Bodies receive support from both local education authorities and the Department of Education and Science. At local level, extra-mural departments of universities are financially supported by many local education authorities and, in addition, often receive a 'hidden grant' in the form of free use of educational premises. The same arrangement applies in many parts of the country in respect of the local provision by the Workers' Educational Association.

In the context of local education authority provision, political education can take a number of different forms, each of which is limited by financial and political considerations. These considerations will vary from one authority to another. The Russell Committee, in its report published in 1973, stated that *"If adult education has not hitherto been outstandingly successful in meeting this kind of need, it is partly because of a certain unwillingness to become entangled with controversy. However, society needs an educational forum in which controversial issues can be studied, and we believe adult education should be free to explore such areas fully. Practice in the handling and analysis of information, and in the questioning and rebutting of argument, is quite as essential as access to the information. For dissemination of information, the mass media are better equipped; for the cultivation of critical and independent powers of thought and expression, there is no substitute for the Adult Learning Group."*⁽²²⁾

This refers in part to one view of political education, namely, how to ensure that ill-informed sections of the population are provided with up-to-date and relevant information to enable them to make decisions that affect their own daily lives. From a local education authority point of view, this type of political education is usually considered 'safe'. It can be described as an adult version of current affairs and civic education.

However, the simple and neutral provision of information about political issues is often not sufficient. Those people who, by whatever definition, feel themselves to be or are objectively powerless, seek the means whereby the information conveyed to them can be used in the pursuit and obtaining of power. This encompasses a range of activities which can be generally described as political organisation. It is a

legitimate part of the task of adult education providers, whether local education authority financed or not, to ensure that sections of the population and individuals, who seek ways in which information newly acquired can be put to practical use in the preparation of and creation of political organisations, are given the very opportunities they need.

This creates the link between adult education and community development, and there is no doubt that, in any form of community-related adult education, community development skills and techniques are much in use. An example of this form of political education is the organisation of information and knowledge by local people in resident and tenant groups preparing to present a case at a public inquiry. This is then turned into a practical demonstration of presenting the case as at an inquiry, which is similar in kind to much other practical work within the adult education sector. It is, purely and simply, a demonstration of the use to which newly acquired knowledge and information can be put. On the other hand, the next stage in this spectrum, from political education through political organisation, is political action. I would contend that political action, per se, is no part of adult education; but, quite definitely, the preparation of materials and information used in political action and the organisational arrangements of political action can reasonably be based in a political education activity.

The limits on provision by local education authorities, whether direct or indirect, are usually defined by budgets. It is not simply a matter of how much money can an authority afford to spend on education which conditions ultimately what attention is given to political education. Local education authorities must satisfy District Auditors that the expenditure that they are approving in their annual budgets is 'reasonable'. This term relates to a delicate balance between the political commitment, in party political terms, of the local education authority, a rates level which can be clearly defined and defended and, thirdly, an obviously understandable indication of current educational needs. In making financial provision for adult education, of which political education may be an identifiable part, it is no defence on the part of the local education authority to be able to point to social malaise affecting the community, levels of unemployment or obvious indications of physical and social stress. An authority must only, in legal terms, be seen to be providing for educational needs, and thus to respond to social issues, in themselves, is unacceptable.

Some local education authorities are very reluctant to offer financial aid to voluntary organisations to carry out educational work, even though it may well be possible that voluntary organisations are better placed to undertake this work. Quite frequently, a voluntary organisa-

tion can reasonably and accurately claim to be closer to the local neighbourhood's needs and more in tune, organisationally and philosophically, with the learning needs of the neighbourhood than can a local education authority. In this case it makes common sense to ensure that financial provision is made to enable voluntary organisations to programme educational work. Equally, it is sensible for local education authorities to seek to enable voluntary organisations to undertake experimental or challenging educational work of a political nature in the community which, perhaps because of the sensitive nature of the work, it would be inappropriate or impossible for the local education authority itself to provide. There are large 'P' and small 'p' attitudes on the part of local education authorities towards voluntary organisations and towards political issues. One may be quite prepared to tackle head-on political issues affecting local communities through programmed discussion sessions, seminars and lectures in the local community. Another authority may be very reluctant to touch anything of a controversial nature through its adult education service. Equally, it may not be prepared to grant-aid voluntary organisations to tackle this work.

Political education can be provided by a variety of local government departments in addition to the Education Department. Planning Departments can provide public information sessions, lectures and discussion meetings for local communities on planning issues and, thereby, enable voluntary organisations and interest groups to become more aware and articulate in expressing the wishes of the local community. Housing Departments, through the Housing Welfare Service, are enabled by housing legislation to provide educational programmes related to housing maintenance, budgeting and other family issues. Social Services Departments, through the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act and other legislation, are empowered to provide a range of educational opportunities for the disabled, house-bound and elderly. Environmental Health Departments and Consumer Protection Departments have a responsibility to provide much public information and advice in their fields. In all of these cases, it can be argued that the issues touched upon by the local authority departments, other than the Education Department, are related to political education and that the Education Service is often the best placed to deliver these programmes of education.

In carrying forward political education programmes, local authority officers and elected members must pay regard to their positions. Quite reasonably, officers and members, in different ways, must account for their actions and decisions to the local community. Officers must ensure that they maintain a neutral position as between party political pressures. Members must be satisfied that their decisions are made in

the context of educational needs and not party political ambitions or expectations.

It has often been said that, for a developed industrial country, the citizens of the United Kingdom are politically illiterate to the point where the democratic machinery is put at risk. The prime purpose of political education, in the context of adult education generally, is to enable the population of Britain to move from a representative democracy to a participatory democracy.

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Chapter Five

THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

compiled by the Advisory Council's Secretariat

Shortly after its establishment early in 1981 the Council's Adult Political Education Committee decided to enquire into the educational work carried out by national voluntary organisations in the sense of providing, according to the Committee's remit, *"the information and skills which enable people to understand political processes and issues and to participate in the determination and administration of public policy"*.

Questionnaire

With the help of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations a questionnaire was sent in September 1981 to 41 voluntary organisations, representing a cross-section of such organisations. The questionnaire aimed to discover the extent to which, and the ways in which, voluntary organisations are engaged in political education as defined above.

In so far as the 1981 scene can be described by an analysis of the replies to the questionnaire, the following paragraphs summarise the responses of the 18 organisations which gave a positive answer to the question whether they considered that they were involved in providing political education for adults.

How would you define your involvement (in providing political education for adults)?

From 18 relevant responses: 7 considered they were information providers; 4 were engaged in providing information and training courses or in training only; the remaining 7 were only very generally engaged in the activity.

In undertaking any of this work do you co-operate, formally or informally, with the public education system, particularly statutory or voluntary adult education bodies?

From 17 relevant responses: 10 indicated co-operation with the public education system; 2 indicated no overall co-operation but with some local exceptions; and 5 no co-operation at all.

With regard to co-operation with adult education bodies, 8 indicated co-operation (two of these mentioned the WEA, the rest did not specify); 4 no overall co-operation but with some exceptions; and 5 no co-operation at all.

*Do you have staff specifically responsible for this educational work?
If yes, please indicate how many full-time
and how many part-time*

What are their main educational activities?

From 17 relevant responses: 10 indicated they did not have staff specifically responsible for this work.

From the 7 organisations which did have staff so engaged, 2 had staff involved in producing materials for the use of others (local groups or individuals) and 5 had staff engaged in producing materials and/or organising training sessions. In the latter category 4 organisations employed between one and three full-time staff and 1 organisation relied on 2 to 3 part-time staff.

What educational methods are normally used?

From 12 relevant responses most indicated the production of materials and a small number indicated use of the materials in training, referring to 'group work', 'exercises', and 'experiential learning'; 2 organisations saw themselves as giving advice.

Are appropriate educational materials available?

Do you produce your own materials?

Do you use materials produced elsewhere?

From 14 relevant responses: 8 organisations considered that appropriate educational materials were available; 4 considered not and 2 that they were 'sometimes' available.

13 produced their own materials and 1 did 'sometimes'.

13 used materials produced elsewhere and 1 did not.

How is this educational work funded?

From 16 relevant responses: only one organisation appeared to have a specific fund for its political education work; the remainder funded this work through their general income.

Would you welcome specific public funding for this work?

From 15 relevant responses: 13 organisations said they would welcome specific public funding; 1 organisation would not welcome such funding and 1 was not sure.

What are the main problems in pursuing your involvement (in providing political education for adults)?

Categories of response with the number of times each response was mentioned were:

Shortage of finance	7
Connected with attitudes	6
Shortage of experienced staff	3
Shortage of time	3
Lack of resources (not specified)	2

What developments would you most wish to see?

Categories of response with the number of times each response was mentioned were:

More staff and/or materials, with appropriate funding	8
(This response was possibly prompted by the previous question).	
Attitude change by the public or central government	4
(Reference was made here to the Charity Commissioners' views on political education campaigning; this is further referred to below).	
Political education to be included in school and college curricula	4
More links with education providers	3
More links between education and work	1
More co-operation with other agencies	1

The responses suggest that those voluntary organisations which engage in political education would value the opportunity to do so on a larger scale with greater resources and with more 'openness'. There is also a clear opportunity for greater co-operation between voluntary organisations and educational bodies in this work.

Consultation

In order to discuss at first hand with representatives of voluntary organisations and educational bodies some of the aspects of providing political education for adults, the Council's Political Education Committee held a consultation meeting in co-operation with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations in February 1982. Twenty-two people attended representing 13 organisations.

Two contributions to this meeting were of special interest. The first was from an officer of a voluntary organisation, classed as a charity, who analysed the experience of his own organisation in the following way:

Essentially the Charity Commissioners had objected to some of the campaigning which the charity was undertaking. A 'limited company' had therefore been formed to carry out this aspect of the organisation's work. This points to the need for a broader concept of political education by the state and by the Charity Commissioners, since both appear to have difficulty in distinguishing party politics from general political activity. There is consequently a need to help civil servants and others to understand this broader definition and to relinquish self-protection which the narrower definition appears to offer.

There are different levels of political education but ultimately they are all part of the same process of helping people to play a part in society. The price to be paid for providing political education is however frequent criticism of the provider.

Charitable status apart, voluntary organisations would be unwise to ally themselves with any political party since they usually reflect the last ten years of political activity rather than looking forward to the next ten years.

The second contribution was a short paper on political education and charities presented by the legal adviser of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. This paper is reproduced here in its entirety:

A charity is a special kind of voluntary organisation: it must be established for purposes which the law regards as charitable. Unfortunately, the legal and the popular meanings of 'charity' and 'charitable purposes' do not always coincide.

One of the recognised legal heads of charity is the advancement of education. However, not all education is legally charitable. Two main criteria must be satisfied: the public, or a sufficient section of the public, must be benefited, or must be capable of being benefited; and the subject matter must be of educational value — in the eyes of the law.

One's own children are not a sufficient section of the public; nor are the children of the employees of a firm (no matter how large).

'Education' in this context is not confined to the 3 Rs. There must, however, be elements of direct instruction and study.

Instruction in the process of government (whether central or local), its history, development and current practice, would appear to be capable of being legally charitable whether as an object in its own right or as a means of achieving an object.

No teaching is entirely free from bias. But, to the extent that instruction becomes propaganda, it will not be acceptable as a charitable activity. It is one thing to set before the public, as dispassionately as possible, the pros and cons of a particular method of government; it is quite another to advocate radical changes to the existing system.

In the eyes of the Charity Commissioners, 'education' is a somewhat overworked head of charity, so that educational activities tend to come under close scrutiny. This is particularly so in the case of organisations seeking to be established as charities. In practice, the Charity Commissioners regard 'charitable purposes' as the sum of an organisation's declared objects (which must be exclusively charitable in the legal sense), powers i.e. the means by which those objects are to be achieved (and which by definition, cannot be exclusively charitable), and actual activities.

An organisation whose declared objects are overtly 'political' in the sense of advocating a particular system (or party) will not be capable of being a charity at law. Certain activities of a 'political' character are nevertheless permissible, for instance:

- (a) where the government itself is investigating, or has propounded proposals for changes in the law;
- (b) where a charity, by itself or with others, wishes, in certain circumstances, to put forward reasoned proposals for changes in the law;
- (c) where, although Parliament is involved, the reason for approaching it is not to be regarded as essentially 'political'.

These three areas are in fact discussed at some length in the Charity Commissioners' Report for 1969.

All such activities may only lawfully be undertaken by a charity in direct furtherance of its primary charitable objects.

Hence the conclusion which might be drawn is that voluntary organisations with charitable status can be inhibited from developing any work in the field of political education because of the risk of prejudicing their status in the eyes of the Charity Commissioners.



Chapter Six

POLITICAL EDUCATION FOR ADULTS IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

by Jagdish Gundara

Nature of multiculturalism

The issues raised by multiculturalism extend beyond the simplistic notion of 'ethnic' groups which live in British society. Such a narrow focus tends to problematise the very groups which are subjected to racial discrimination. It is essential if adults in Britain are to receive an appropriate political education that they must be introduced first of all to a discussion about the political nature of British society. Without such an encompassing context, national and local provision for political education would be fragmentary.

British society has always been and continues to be diverse. It deals with this diversity by assimilation. Political education should offer the opportunity to study this diversity in a systematic and structured way. It is therefore important to focus on the wider society rather than on the black community as the 'problem', and as the 'underprivileged', in need of political education. The more basic need is rather to educate the wider community. Concerns may then be directed towards the constituent groups in society, including the black community.

British society may be described as diverse in terms of language, religion, territoriality, class and race. In linguistic terms Britain has historically had a variety of languages and dialects (Celtic, Icelandic, German, French and Flemish). African, Asian and Caribbean languages merely add to this linguistic repertoire. Similarly, in religious terms Britain has always been a diverse country (pagans, Roman Catholics, Fundamentalists, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists and Jews).⁽²³⁾ The addition of Hindus, Muslims, Rastas and Sikhs simply extends this diversity. Scotland and Wales are the obvious examples of territoriality (e.g. regional and community allegiances) which exist in British society. An examination of British society also reveals class divisions and differential power relationships between them. Finally, while racism has numerous manifestations (i.e. anti-Jewish ones) it is black people who are visibly different and are, therefore, most often treated differently.

Institutions and structures of the state re-shape and mould various features of diversity in British society. The processes, mechanisms and reasons why and how these diversities are underplayed constitute the study of politics. It is important to study these because the nation state, for various reasons, may wish to stress its sovereignty and unity and underplay the issues of social diversity. Similarly, the stress on

'ethnicity' may help in diverting attention away from the broader questions of national minorities, as well as the major problem of racism.

Adult political educators must concern themselves with the descriptive categories of social diversity and examine the inter-relationships and power differentials between hierarchically based groups within the state. Hence, an exclusive focus on 'ethnic' groups may be relevant in studying the anthropological features of British society, but not necessarily so in the study of its political character. In the British context a concentration on ethnicity deflects the debate and discussion away from, for example, such pertinent issues as the 1981 Nationality Act, the Immigration Acts (1962, 1968 and 1971) and the Race Relations Act (1976), all of which testify to the existence of discrimination against blacks and not discrimination based on ethnicity.⁽²⁴⁾ There is ample evidence of discrimination in all sectors of the society including education, employment, housing, and the ordinary day to day lives of the black community.⁽²⁵⁾ Concentration on ethnicity also detracts from discussion based on the wider issues of racism and sexism as they are reflected in the curricula, practices and structures of adult education.

Political education needs

The articulation by certain sub-groups of their political interests is more than counterbalanced by the political illiteracy, uninterest and apathy of the majority. Given the way in which society is structured, a 'hidden curriculum' operates within adult education which, by its very inattention, perpetuates the status quo. The very fact of stating that a more encompassing political education is not an appropriate subject for adult education is in itself a political statement and supports the present political structures, which, at least in part, are found to be racist. Discriminatory legislation on immigration and nationality at the official levels is evidence of this.

The challenge for adult and continuing education is to meet the political education needs of the wider community. While it is easier to provide for the needs of a politically mobilised group, adult educators should consider examining the needs of the total population whose political experience and particular interests can be informed by broader issues. People might then be more able to take part in an informed manner in those political issues which affect their lives in specific as well as general terms. It could be useful to initiate discussions with community groups on specific practical issues which might then generate a broader interest. These groups might be residential communities with concerns about housing and education, or places of work where the concerns are about wages and conditions of employment. A study of local issues may point in the direction of

societal problems and help to clarify divergent perspectives among community groups at local as well as national levels.⁽²⁶⁾

Political education can contribute to the refinement of the political skills of these groups which are involved in issue-based politics. However, it can be equally useful for the political basis of such issue-based politics to be broadened to encompass more general and theoretical political concerns.

Political situation and racism

There is an assumption in certain quarters of British academic life that racism is acceptable because it is part and parcel of the way British society is constituted. This assumption is ideologically organised within the established political order, and the pseudo-scientific rationalisation for such racism is contained in the Social Darwinist schools of human ethology and socio-biology. While such ideas have been rebutted⁽²⁷⁾ their cultural roots and the scape-goating of the black community for society's wider political and economic failures still persist. The purpose of political education in this context is not to indoctrinate but to challenge the pre-existence of racism in British society and institutions. It may also enable tutors and adult learners to contextualise racism within the wider divisions and diversities in British society.

The difficulties for adult educators stem partly from the widespread absence of political education from the school curriculum. Schools can only discharge their statutory obligations if young adults are politically literate. The attempts by the Inner London Education Authority to examine the feasibility of political education ought to be welcomed by adult educators since curriculum planners have already done useful work in curriculum issues which adult educators can build upon.⁽²⁸⁾

Racism is a major problem. Its institutional and structural features can only be resolved by engaging the larger society rather than primarily the communities which are subjected to racism. There is a dangerous lack of concern about this social malaise, as evidenced by a tendency to scape-goat the visibly different and powerless communities (as if they are the problem). Salman Rushdie has recently maintained that the crisis *"is not simply economic or political. It is a crisis of the whole culture, of the society's entire sense of itself. And racism is the most clearly visible part of the crisis, the tip of the kind of iceberg that sinks ships."*⁽²⁹⁾

While this issue demands a major social and political commitment, the adult education sector has a role to play in dealing with it at an educational level. Race relations appears to have been little studied in Britain's extra-mural classes. A study published in 1972 made no reference to courses in the field of racism or race relations.⁽³⁰⁾ A 1978

study from Nottingham also did not refer to any work done in this area.⁽³¹⁾ The classification of course titles by Mee and Wiltshire⁽³²⁾ makes no reference to this issue: courses concerned with the black community are included in the category of 'disadvantaged groups'. This perpetuates the compensatory and social deficit models of the black community and deflects attention from the societal causes of such problems.

Given the social basis of the adult education movement, it is important that major attention should be given to the issue of racism in British society. A political dimension to the study of race relations would have the advantage of helping to enhance personal development and to resolve some of the social problems consequent on racism. This would be consonant with the major rationale for adult education, namely its emphasis on personal development and social relevance.

The intransigence of attitudes formed at a young age, with little political knowledge, underlines the need for political education for children in schools. This work can then be built upon by institutions of further and adult education. Attempts to introduce the study of race relations to young adults without any prior political knowledge can be counter-productive, as illustrated by attempts to examine race relations issues, without proper planning, at a London technical college when young apprentices were found to be more prejudiced after three hours of study than before it.⁽³³⁾ Another researcher has suggested that *"The lesson would seem to be rather in the necessity for more careful planning and preparation, and, of course, for more time."*⁽³⁴⁾

One of the real challenges for adult and continuing education lies in developing constructive approaches to teaching race relations within the framework of political education. These courses can range from those for adults in general to those tailor-made for social workers, teachers, managers, trade unionists, administrators or the police. Recent controversy over the training of police cadets has demonstrated the extremely high level of prejudice at the Hendon Police College.⁽³⁵⁾ This may be a case in point of the inadequacy of race relations courses which simply stress a sociological perspective while ignoring the dimensions of political education. Tailor-made courses on the 1976 Race Relations Act, if not accompanied by a political education component, may similarly allow officials who know the legislation to evade the Act as well as implement it.

Within the context of political education it might be worth exploring ways of adapting racism awareness courses to deal with white racism. Katz has developed anti-racist work based on encounter groups: *"The purpose of these groups is to create positive change in attitudes and more white people to take action to combat racism."*⁽³⁶⁾

One of the problems in dealing with 'attitudes' may be that it only tackles superficial issues and ignores structural issues in society. The racism awareness approach has been developed in Britain by groups in London and more recently by David Ruddell in Birmingham.⁽³⁷⁾ His approach tends to move beyond the simplistic human relations approach by underpinning his programme with political and economic analysis. Nevertheless, such racism awareness programmes need to be part of a broader strategy and study of this complex phenomenon within institutions.

Another approach would be to start with the specific attitudes and experiences of students and use that as a basis for defining issues and problems. Questions about racism may lead to study of ethnocentrism, prejudice, discrimination, bigotry, stereotyping, nationalism and fascism. Jon McIlroy points out that *"This would develop into a discussion of explanations which would necessitate a historical explanation of the roots of racism."*⁽³⁸⁾ This approach involves a fair amount of reading because students have to follow social and economic developments as well as examine the development of racist ideas.⁽³⁹⁾ An examination of the development of racism may well lead students to literature on the theories of immigration as well as Britain's own imperial and colonial past as being responsible for the presence of blacks in Britain. As Sivanandan has said in another context: *"We are here, because you were there"*.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Such explanatory frameworks from various disciplines (history, economics, psychology, politics) can be used to examine critically the contemporary situation with reference to housing, employment, trade unions and education.

In the study of racism within this broader, multi-disciplinary framework, tutors may start with the stock of political information that students have and build upon it. It would entail a critical view of society and relate to the real world and the experience of adults. Geoff Whitty points out that political education and political literacy can be used to inculcate 'domestication' and 'quietism' rather than 'critical awareness'.⁽⁴¹⁾ The use of a multi-disciplinary approach which encourages a 'critical awareness' may also lead to the examination of another strategy for political education: the whole curriculum may need to be appraised for its suitability in the context of the wider diversities in society. This reappraisal of courses may allow issues of political education to be taught across the whole curriculum, particularly with reference to racist and sexist bias. This approach would, of course, require in-service training of *all* tutors, not necessarily only those concerned with the specific subject of 'political education'.

Political knowledge and skills

The experience of students-as-persons and the roles they perform are brought up against the systems in which they operate. This has

relevance for the curriculum in the field of political education, which also enables students to change the economic, political and social systems which marginalise or restrict them.

Professor Walter James has described the observable features of such a curriculum: *"It is recognised that life is not only the arena where knowledge and skills have to be applied, but that life is also the arena where knowledge and skills, if they are to be relevant, have to be acquired; and it therefore produces shifts in the knowledge and skills base of adult education: (i) a shift from knowledge organised and created by others to knowledge organised and created by persons out of their situation; (ii) a shift from knowledge mediated by others, to knowledge acquired at first hand from life; (iii) a shift from knowledge and skills acquisition which then has to be applied, to knowledge and skills acquisition through problem-solving in life; (iv) a shift from knowledge and skills acquired by individuals, to knowledge and skills acquired through and by the group which maximises their production or their application."*⁽⁴²⁾

Professor James continues by defining areas of action which delimit people's lives and contain the powers of the state. This scheme allows for a shift towards the study of wider social and political values and extends the local concerns of groups to a global perspective on various issues. Adult educators are particularly able to build on the experience of adults. The Russell Committee recognised this and described political education as: *"essentially a task for adult education rather than for the school alone, requiring as it does from its students a background of practical experience, maturity of judgement and the serious motivation that comes from the challenge and responsibilities of adult life."*⁽⁴³⁾

Groups of blacks and women acquire political education as adults by resisting oppression and discrimination. Their resistance should not be construed to mean that these groups are devoid of political values and awareness. Quite the contrary. Their political values are informed by their experiences of defined roles, political processes and committee structures which they find inadequate. For instance, black women have resisted the stereotypical roles and functions allotted to them in their places of work. Asian women workers have had to engage in struggles with management, white workers and official trade unions to redefine their roles as the underpaid, under-employed and over-worked segment of the working population.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Young blacks in Brixton, Toxteth and Southall, who are unemployed, demonstrate another dimension of resistance because they do not receive equity after leaving school. The negative experiences of schooling and the politics of the street are not recognised as being a valid basis for embarking on further education and second chance learning. Therefore their tutors need to be aware of the experiences

and the broader political issues as perceived by these groups. Those who work on role issues not only need to be aware of the system as it operates, but also have an idea of what the system 'ought to be'. Those who teach development education must similarly include issues of colonisation and continued dominant-subordinate relationships between the first and the third world.

Access and English as a second language

Issues of access to education go hand in hand with access to resources-for-life. Do courses on housing rights lead to a better chance for the homeless to acquire homes? Unless adults see such education as also leading to a shift of power in their favour, basic education will be seen to have failed.

Access to 'second chance' learning can only be seen to be meaningful if significant resource allocation ensures an attack on educational disadvantages. A broad strategy needs to be adopted to ensure that access courses in institutions of further and higher education encompass not only humanities and social sciences⁽⁴⁵⁾ but also mathematics and the sciences. Hence, access to courses and careers in commerce, technology, industry and the professions ought to be open to blacks and women. Continuing education, therefore, needs to re-examine issues, practices and the hidden curriculum which define black and women students out of the mathematics and sciences as subjects and thereby circumscribe their careers.

The success or failure of basic education ought to be measured by how well it is able to help reverse the larger inequalities of society. Unless second chance learning can, in fact, improve life chances, it will remain a peripheral activity which continues to marginalise those who have been failed by schools and schooling.

Issues of access to education are to a certain extent tied to issues of language education in schools and further education institutions. The failure of schools to deal effectively with issues of linguistic diversity in society, has an added dimension in the continuing education of adults. English as second language provision remains patchy and has a low status in colleges and institutions of adult education. Many practices and regulations entrench the institutionalised disadvantages of English as second language learners. As a lecturer in further education states: *"The regulations governing fees and finance can effectively create an ESL ghetto in the college. The apparent equation of ESL students with low level achievers is reflected both in the narrow range and level of courses offered and in the expectations teachers may have of these students."*⁽⁴⁶⁾

Colleges of further education need to simplify regulations and provide English as a second language as part of mainstream post-16 provisions so that ESL learners, parents and lecturers do not operate in

a legal and administrative maze. Women particularly are rendered invisible in ESL provision and, along with blacks, are steered towards adult basic education. At this level stereotyping of ESL learners as low achievers perpetuates the notions of only 'survival English' and militates against higher academic achievement and professional and skill training. 'Survival skills' ought not only to include the content of a subject but an ability to change the external conditions which circumscribe one's life.

Issues of access and English as a second language highlight issues of political education as a process in the educational system. While they may reinforce the existing structuring in society, as they seem currently to be doing, these issues may also provide tools through knowledge which can enable people to change society. Part of the aim of this process is what Martin Yarnit has called the need to "*stimulate a critical consciousness*"⁽⁴⁷⁾ and the adult students need to be part of the process of defining this education.

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Chapter Seven

THE MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES

compiled by the Advisory Council's Secretariat

This chapter starts from the assumption that the main political parties in Britain might be expected to regard it as both proper and useful to make their own provision of political education for adults, aimed perhaps primarily at their own party members and by extension to the general public, but excluding for present purposes the work of the parties' youth organisations. This might for instance include teaching about the parties' philosophies and policies, some analytical study of current issues and the parties' stance on them, and exchanges of informed views about the future development of party policies.

To find out how far this assumption was borne out in actual practice, the Council's Secretariat made enquiries in Autumn 1982 at the national headquarters of the Conservative, Labour, Liberal and Social Democratic parties. The following paragraphs are based on the information thus obtained through informal interviews with party administrators and through published materials. The help received in this way is gratefully acknowledged.

One of the very few published references in recent years to this area of the political parties' work was contained in the report, presented to the House of Commons in 1976 by an official committee chaired by Lord Houghton, on *Financial Aid to Political Parties*.⁽⁴⁸⁾ As the title indicates this report was essentially concerned about the scope for public funding to sustain efficient party organisations as the foundation of parliamentary democracy, but it necessarily considered the range of tasks which it was appropriate for the parties to carry out.

Among these responsibilities the report included "training and political education" and argued that the need for this was continually increasing because "the business of government at both national and local level is now more complex than ever. The powers, services and administration of government, both centrally and locally, come into the lives and homes of us all". In consequence the report saw "politics" as embracing "social services, education, housing, land use, wages, industry, state enterprises, prices, municipal services, rents, rates, taxation, the interests and rights of the citizen and the impact of bureaucracy". It went on to conclude regretfully that "the facilities in all political parties for education for both central and local government are becoming less and less adequate". Since the report saw political education as a "legitimate and important role for all parties in Britain" it expressed understandable concern about the "extent to which

financial stringency may force them to abandon even what they now provide".

From this Lord Houghton's committee deduced that it was especially important for the political parties to pay attention to *"communication and participation by the electorate"*, and added that some of the evidence it had received suggested that *"parties were failing in what might be expected of them in this field"*. By comparison the political parties in most European countries often play, for a variety of reasons, a much wider part in local community activity. As a result *"people go to 'the party' for a great deal more personal service than they usually do here. The failure of the parties in Britain to satisfy the growing demand for participation and involvement in policy making may account for the note of disappointment we heard from some witnesses"*.

It was therefore clear to the committee that communication between the parties and the public had to be improved, and they believed that their European evidence suggested that this improvement *"could be an important factor in raising the general level of political education"* and in stemming what they saw as the decline of general public participation in party activity. This decline prompted an ominous warning in the report that *"the dangers which can arise from our democratic procedures falling into the hands of a narrow and unrepresentative minority need not be emphasised"*.

These extensive quotations from the Houghton committee's report show clearly enough how highly that committee rated political education for adults and the critical contribution to be made by the political parties. That was in 1976. The report's recommendations led to some limited improvement in the financial stability of the party organisations, but six years later our enquiries would suggest that the political education element in the parties' work has scarcely been strengthened and may indeed even have grown weaker.

However, the clearest point to emerge from our enquiry was that this weakness was a matter of real concern to all the parties. If there was neglect, it was the result of competing activities for diminishing resources and the consequent problem of convincing the parties' purse-holders that the funding of political education was as good an investment as, say, the appointment of much needed full-time constituency agents.

There was certainly no reluctance to accept that the political education of adults was a legitimate activity for political parties. Presumably this acceptance was coloured by the fact that the educational process involved could be firmly controlled by the party, and hence there were none of the party suspicions about adverse political bias which cling to the provision of political education by other,

particularly educational, institutions. By the same token the dividing line between political education and party propaganda was scarcely at issue, since no party was likely or even expected to be impartial in expounding its own policies or criticising those of its opponents.

While this blurring of the distinction between education and publicity may be unacceptable to educators in pursuit of balance and impartiality, it fits justifiably enough into the parties' main concern which is the education or, perhaps more accurately, the training of their own members. It was this area of political education which most concerned the Houghton committee, particularly at the local level where, for instance, party members hold important elected responsibilities and need to understand the relevance of national policies to the making and implementation of local decisions. In going beyond this to the political education of the general public, the word used in the Houghton report is information rather than education.

This distinction appeared to be implicit in the views obtained from staff at the parties' headquarter offices. There the emphasis was on educating their members about the party's policies. Any extension of this to the general public, while it might be wished for, was not practicable in resource terms. Clearly the adult public (i.e. the electorate) had to be informed about party policies, but this had to be done either as a two-stage exercise through the local membership or directly, and generally more likely, through the mass media.

These resource imperatives inevitably meant that the strength of the party's local organisation largely determined the extent to which it could mount political education programmes for its membership. This local organisation in turn depended greatly on the party's ability to appoint paid staff at local or even regional level.

In this sense the Conservative party was best equipped, but even they found it difficult to convince their constituency-based staff that much of their hard-pressed time should be allocated to political education, which by its nature could rarely show positive gains for the party. The other three parties, with claims to more extensive reformist principles and policies, saw it as even more important to make sure that their local members understood, supported and contributed to those policies. But, paradoxically, they were even less well resourced than the Conservatives to undertake this work of elucidation and consultation.

As a very new party this was a particularly acute problem for the Social Democrats, not least because they are seeking to build up their policies through a participative membership with regular postal ballots organised centrally through a fully computerised membership list. Thus the SDP political education programme at this early stage in the party's existence was closely linked to its procedures for making

and approving policies. The other crucially important area of transmitting some understanding of those policies to the general public could only be seen as practicable nationally through the mass media and locally through dissemination from the area party structure (there are up to 200 area party committees, each covering 3 or 4 parliamentary constituencies, rather than single constituency committees which would be too demanding at this stage in over-extending limited resources).

The Liberals, with their long established local party structure, clearly face the same difficulty as the SDP in spreading very limited organisational resources in any way effectively. Here the emphasis is still on educating the local membership about party policies, and much of this is aimed at and through elected local government members via the Association of Liberal Councillors, with the Liberal Parliamentary Association providing a wider national context for membership education.

The Labour Party is the only one to have a headquarters staff member expressly designated as the 'national political education officer', who, in turn, is responsible for briefing and equipping political education organisers at constituency and branch level. Documents prepared for this briefing work make clear the party's view that political education should not be confused with propaganda and that the party's political education programme is designed "*to give members the opportunity of gaining a fuller understanding of politics*". The twin aims of the programme are to offer training in the political skills needed by effective party members and party representatives on public bodies, and to promote policy study within the party.

The Conservatives have a similar, and more ambitiously organised, political education programme which is the specific province of the Conservative Political Centre. Organisationally distinct within the party's national headquarters, but physically based there and responsible for running the party's bookshop, the CPC was founded in 1945 by R A Butler "*to be the political education centre of the Conservative Party*". This Centre's aims are explicitly stated to be "*to educate Conservatives about political problems; to stimulate thinking about politics throughout the party; to disseminate throughout the party new ideas on policy and political action; to create a channel for the exchange of views between the leadership and the party in the constituencies....; and to propagate Conservative views amongst the general public*". This final aim of reaching out to the general public is the most explicitly stated among the four parties, although in practice it has proved the most expensive and difficult to undertake and has not been greatly developed, except in the sense of the 'bread on the waters' circulation and sales of party literature.

The CPC has in principle a thorough committee structure from constituency association level through area advisory committees to a national advisory committee. However, this structure inevitably depends to a large degree on servicing by the party's area based staff and, since they are generally over-stretched and under-manned (even though they may usually be better staffed than the other three parties) and sometimes sceptical about the relative value of investing time and effort into formal political education work, the extent of the CPC's presence in each constituency varies very considerably. Similarly the CPC national office has very limited staffing with only two professional staff — a full-time director and an administrator who is also the bookshop manageress.

The methods used by the parties in their membership education work are generally fairly similar. The Conservatives have perhaps developed the most diverse range of provision. Particularly notable is their 'three-way contact programme' in which a 'contact brief' on a particular topic is published and circulated to constituency groups, often with an audio-cassette introduction by a parliamentary front-bencher; the constituency discussions are in due course formally reported back to the CPC national office, which summarises them for the front-bencher whose further responses are then finally circulated to the constituency groups. The Conservatives' own short-term residential college, Swinton College in Yorkshire, was closed several years ago for economy reasons, but something of the study school pattern established then remains with an annual summer school (usually held in an Oxford College) for over 200 participants and two or three (usually over-subscribed) weekend schools each year. In addition the CPC is continuously publishing and distributing pamphlets on a wide variety of political subjects.

The Labour Party's emphasis is rather more at local level with the local political education organisers being advised to present a three-fold programme of: introductory training sessions for new members on the history, organisation and policies of the party; local government courses for prospective Labour councillors; and general meetings on policy held three or four times a year. All of this provision is supported by the national office through the publication of printed materials and the training of the local political education organisers.

All of the parties appeared to regard their political education provision as something which they should undertake directly themselves, in so far as their scarce resources permitted, rather than looking to any outside educational agency. There were occasional exceptions to be found to this rule, as for example local Labour parties sometimes looking to the Workers' Educational Association for an independent tutorial input, but clearly the parties' almost exclusive emphasis on membership education and training makes it relatively

difficult for them to equate their needs with the conventional 'balanced' political education provision of the adult educational institutions.

To summarise from this brief and therefore inevitably selective and limited review of the four parties' political education work, the following conclusions appear to stand out most clearly:

- Political education is seen by the national headquarters staff of all the parties as both proper and important for them to provide.
- While this political education is seen in principle as properly directed both to the party membership and to the general public (i.e. the electorate), it is in practice almost exclusively limited to party members. Contact with the general public is at the level of information giving rather than any educational provision.
- This restriction is partly the result of the financial difficulties of all the parties, and it can sometimes be exacerbated at regional and local level by the scepticism of party staff arising from the inevitably imprecise and long-term results of political education work when compared with the immediately tangible effects of, for example, membership campaigns and fund-raising.
- There appears to be relatively little co-operation between the parties and adult education institutions in assisting the parties with their political education work, but this is not surprising in view of the parties' emphasis on membership education and training about their own philosophies, policies and practices.

It would seem reasonable to accept for the present that the political parties are right to concentrate their very limited political education resources on their own members. While all four parties subscribe to the view that political education must not be equated with political propaganda, it is difficult to envisage that they either could, or perhaps even should, provide a balanced and impartial study of politics for the general public (or even for their own membership).

As a Conservative Political Centre leaflet says: *"Other parts of the Party organisation concern themselves with the necessary tasks of raising funds, locating voters and getting them to the polls. The CPC seeks victory in the battle of ideas."* This would seem to be consonant with the other parties' views, and hardly surprisingly so.

In conclusion it seems to be most important for adult educators to appreciate that, in this politically sensitive area of political education, the party organisations currently provide a generally 'partial' or 'oriented' form for their own members, which party politicians would properly object to if the same unbalanced provision were made for the general public by a public educational institution.

This is in no way to criticise what the parties are doing, under great

financial pressures, in their political education work, but it does raise questions about the limitations which there must be in extending party-based political education to the general public, and in any extensive co-operation between individual parties and adult education institutions in providing political education for adults.

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Chapter Eight

THE POLITICAL EDUCATION NEEDS OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS: A LIVERPOOL SURVEY

by Rita Cordon

This chapter is derived from a research report prepared by Rita Cordon for the Advisory Council. The aim was to examine the political education needs of local community organisations and the degree to which those needs were being met. Since it was not possible to fund anything but a very short-term research enquiry, the Council decided to concentrate on a local rather than any national enquiry. Liverpool was regarded as a suitable choice because of its high level of activity (and problems) in urban renewal through statutory and non-statutory organisations, and the corresponding activity of the adult education providers in the city.

INTRODUCTION

"The democratic process in this country depends for its vitality upon the voluntary activity of people in pressure groups, community groups, voluntary organisations, political parties and elected bodies of various kinds. The imbalance in information and resources between such people and the professional bureaucracies with which they have to deal is considerable and should be redressed as much as possible".⁽⁴⁹⁾

Need for political education

In recent years concern has frequently been expressed by adult educators for more attention to be given to the provision of political education. It has been recognised that democratic structures are of little use in themselves if people do not have access to them and do not see the point of them. Accounts of the extent to which people are ignorant of those structures are not infrequent. On a recent visit to Liverpool a Cabinet Minister chatted to a group of local youths about their circumstances. They catalogued the difficulties and problems they experienced and he suggested they approach their councillor. 'What is a councillor?' he was asked.

Political literacy is clearly a matter of possessing the knowledge, skill and attitudes needed to make informed judgements about politics, but it is also, crucially, about being able to take part in all the stages of the political process. *"The politically literate person is not merely an informed spectator; he is someone capable of active participation".⁽⁵⁰⁾*

A recent report on *Adult Education and Participation* points to the fact that government reports have increasingly called for more participation in a variety of areas of public life, and that, at the same time, interest groups are demanding more consultation.⁽⁵¹⁾ Lack of knowledge of political processes, however, leads to a sense of alienation and frustration which makes full participation impossible. In all communities people are undoubtedly confronted with issues about which they feel deep concern, yet, without the information, skills and confidence which would enable them to enter the debate and decision-making on those issues, their concern can be dissipated in a sense of general helplessness. In 1976 Margaret Simey wrote "The seething mass of protest which is such a feature of contemporary life is proof that pressure is building up. Community groups are the raw material of politics though many go out of their way to dissociate themselves from the political parties".⁽⁵²⁾ She warns of the dangers if this concern is frustrated of expression and turns sour. Yet as the structures with which people have to deal become increasingly complex the opportunities for getting lost in them, for becoming frustrated and alienated, become greater. As one local government officer in Liverpool remarked gloomily "Many members and officers don't know fully what the procedures [of local government] are, so how can you expect people in local community groups to understand them?"

Role of adult education

Education has been identified as "the key predictor of the propensity of people to participate in civic affairs",⁽⁵³⁾ but from a survey of 228 providers of adult education the same report concludes that "Education for participation represents only a minor theme in adult education: few agencies devote many of their resources to work of this kind; and virtually none have considered policies for this aspect of their activities".

The implications of this failure to provide for political education needs are serious. Unless more attention is given to this work, it has been argued that "electoral democracy may stagnate, voters may make ill-informed and inconsistent choices, government action in important areas may be thwarted by a sullen negativism, new structures of participation may remain empty skills, and the political process may become increasingly manipulative".⁽⁵⁴⁾

The concept of political education can be taken to cover a multitude of sins, and some clearer definition of what it means is required. The Russell Committee (1973) described four aspects of political education as follows:

- 'Role education' — concerned with enabling individuals to take up political roles in public life, e.g. in voluntary groups, local government and industry.

- General political literacy — education aimed at providing a broad framework of understanding that enables women and men to participate in democracy.
- Community education — designed to provide the background of understanding and skills that would facilitate community action.
- Education for social leadership — to encourage the emergence of potential community leaders.

The implication of this analysis is that political education needs to move away from an abstract academic approach which reaches politics in terms of theory and institutions. A more practical approach is indicated, one that enables people to involve themselves effectively at all stages of the political process. With this in mind, an acceptable definition of political education is: *"The provision of the information and skills which will enable people to understand political processes and issues and to participate in the determination and administration of public policy"*.⁽⁵⁵⁾

Survey aims and methods

This analysis indicates some of the arguments for providing political education aimed at increasing participation in the processes of government, and also identifies some potential target sectors in the community. It suggests that the people most interested in receiving such education are members of groups and organisations; people already seeking some influence on political decision-making. These may be already constituted formal groups or informal groupings perhaps brought together by other professionals, the 'educator' or a member of the public.

The aims of the survey were to: gain some understanding of the views of members of these groups about the value of such an educational input; to discover whether they felt political education would enable them to carry out their work more effectively; and to find out from them how their political education needs could best be met. No educational provision is likely to be successful unless it relates to the actual demands of the people to whom it is being supplied; it is therefore appropriate to investigate what is actually required by people who are interested in participating in the political process.

Liverpool has a strong voluntary sector: community groups, pressure groups and single-issue campaign groups abound. In view of the limited time available for the survey it was not possible to talk to more than a small number of people involved in these local activities.

Information was collected from: the providers of political education, to discuss the nature and extent of the unmet need; and from members of local organisations which were potential users of this kind of provision. Although this was necessarily a small sample, every

effort was made to ensure that the groups contacted represented as closely as possible a cross-section of local organisations. Representatives were drawn from the following types of organisations: community-based groups concerned with issues such as housing, groups concerned with social welfare issues such as fostering and single parents, and organisations representing the interests of sections of the community such as black groups, women's organisations and unemployed centres. Extended interviews were conducted with representatives of such groups so as to explore what political education they had received, what unmet needs they had, and how they felt these needs could be best responded to.

LIVERPOOL

Perhaps more than any other city in Britain, Liverpool exhibits all the hallmarks of urban decay. Its economy, deriving from the port, has developed as a commercial rather than as an industrial basis. The transition from a trade-based economy to one rooted in new manufacturing industries has led Liverpool into a prolonged decline and a host of serious problems. This is nationally recognised in that Merseyside has been officially designated as a 'development area' almost continuously since 1949.

In December 1980 Liverpool (with a population of 507,400) had 48,376 people registered as unemployed. The City Planning Officer's report (1981) estimated that 20% of the population was out of work, and that the rate in some inner areas was as high as 46 per cent.

The whole range of problems outlined in the government's 1977 White Paper on *Policy for the Inner Cities* are evident in terms of physical decay and social disadvantage. The population is falling: the 1981 census returns show a decline of almost 17% since 1971.

Voluntary sector

The 1977 White Paper emphasised the importance of voluntary organisations in any programme for regenerating the inner cities, and there can be no questioning the richness of the voluntary sector in Liverpool. The *Directory of Neighbourhood Community Organisations*, produced by the Community Liaison Section of Liverpool City Council, lists 327 local groups, mainly residents' associations and community centres. Many more groups concerned with social welfare issues are listed in *Take It From Here*, a directory compiled by the Liverpool Council for Voluntary Service. These organisations deal with an extremely wide range of local community and national issues. They also function in a complex local political situation, as Liverpool City Council has not had any one party in overall control since 1974. In

consequence, according to many people interviewed in the survey, it can be difficult to become knowledgeable about the local political scene.

Adult education

There is a strong tradition of adult education in Liverpool, with substantial provision by the University of Liverpool's Institute of Extension Studies, the local education authority, the Workers' Educational Association, and also by various non-statutory bodies where interesting initiatives have abounded but financial security has been strictly limited.

The city has a tradition of links between adult educators and voluntary community groups. An example is the Neighbourhood Workers Course, set up in the early 1970s by the Institute of Extension Studies to provide an opportunity for community workers to learn about political processes and to develop participatory skills, so as to increase their effectiveness. This led to *Second chance to learn*, a course for working-class adults in social studies and communication skills which is run jointly by the Institute and the WEA. Another instance of such collaboration is *In our Liverpool home*, a series of workshops organised to encourage a response from community groups to the *Inner Areas Summary Report*. This programme was run by the Community Development Section of the City Council in conjunction with the WEA, the Institute of Extension Studies and the Liverpool Council for Voluntary Service, and resulted in the publication of the groups' findings.

Other adult education projects have been supported by the Inner City Partnership programme, as for example the Charles Wootton Centre, which is an adult education establishment mainly for black people and, more recently, the Parent Support Scheme which organises adult education in local primary schools largely for parents. Some of these projects, and many more, find a forum in the Liverpool Adult Education Consortium, formed in 1978 by providers of adult education for working-class people, with the aim of co-ordinating resources, acting as an informal support system for workers, and seeking extra resources for working class education. The Consortium's applications to the Inner City Partnership Fund, to extend such provision in the city, has led to funding for projects such as the *Scotland Road Writers' Workshop*; short residential courses at the Northern College, and a *New opportunities for women* course at a local further education college.

These few examples illustrate some of the features of adult education in Liverpool which are relevant to political education: the pioneering role of the non-statutory sector; the collaboration between bodies in the statutory and non-statutory sector; and the links between adult educators and local community organisations.

POLITICAL EDUCATION NEEDS OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Discussions were held with two groups of people: present providers of political education, and representatives of groups possibly requiring this kind of provision. All felt strongly the need for more political education. Present providers were clearly troubled by their inability to find adequate resources for this work and by the consequent risk that it might be neglected. Members of local community groups expressed frustration about the difficulty of acquiring the information and skills which would help them further their work.

However, since most of these groups had not got to the stage of defining what their educational needs were, it is clear that one crucial need is the availability of development workers with sufficient time and resources to explore with groups both the nature of their problems and how educational resources could help to solve them. This was emphasised by adult educators, who all considered that political education was unlikely to be successful unless it was backed up by development work.

People in local organisations were concerned with immediate practical problems. Their needs were specific and instrumental. It seems important that any educational provision should start with these immediate concerns, and should be sufficiently flexible to respond to them.

Another important point to emerge from the study was the need for courses to be accessible to people. The most carefully constructed and well-taught course is useless if people are excluded from attending. The importance of the timing of courses and of child-care facilities being available so that women could attend was emphasised, as was the need for courses to be neighbourhood-based. The members of some organisations felt it was important for entry to courses to be free, and for participants not in paid employment to be repaid their attendance expenses.

Providers' views

Various agencies in Liverpool have taken a number of interesting initiatives in political education, but there was a general agreement that these attempts have been sporadic and that there was a serious lack of sufficient resources to meet the scale of the existing need.

The University's Institute of Extension Studies runs a number of courses with political study in their content including *Second chance to learn*, courses for trade unionists, issue-based courses (such as one on the Merseyside County Council's structure plan, to which, as a result, some twenty groups were able to contribute informed responses), and courses for public service workers and for volunteers in welfare work. However, it was indicated that there was considerable

need for more political education. The Institute was frequently asked to provide courses by a variety of groups, and had to refuse simply because it did not have the resources to respond. The Institute's staff member responsible for providing for inner city groups reported she had to turn down several requests most weeks. In the words of the Institute's Director *"The unmet need is of a different order from what we have the resources to meet."*

The view of the WEA, which provides a range of courses orientated towards meeting political education needs, was expressed by the District Secretary that *"there is a desperate need as never before in our society for an understanding of political democracy and political philosophy and an understanding of how the system works"*. They run courses on committee techniques for local groups such as residents' associations, ethnic groups, youth clubs and pressure groups. These cover topics related to the internal structure of voluntary organisations and their relationship with both local and national bodies. They have been supported and jointly funded by the LEA. In addition the WEA runs issue-based courses on topics such as housing. It has been involved in a programme of work with local unemployed centres, where the courses have dealt with the problems of group organisation and the relationship of unemployed groups to other bodies. They have also done some work with young people on YOP schemes and would like to develop this, but the Manpower Services Commission has not so far been very responsive in recognising the importance of political education within YOP schemes.

Nigel Connor of the Community Liaison Section of the Liverpool City Council, which has taken some political education initiatives (such as those surrounding the Inner City Partnership Programme), reiterated the adult educators' sense of concern that *"Anyone who knows Liverpool must know the extent of the problems. There is a very serious need for this sort of thing. It could not be more critical"*. Some work was going on, but it was nowhere near sufficient. For example the National Council for Voluntary Organisations has provided courses on the running and administration of community groups, but what was also needed was a much more locally-tuned and long-term approach. People needed more understanding about the powers and duties of local authority officers, the responsibilities of the various departments, how to mount campaigns, and the different roles of central and local government in decision-making. Nigel Connor's view was that *"You need to work at increasing organisations' awareness and their ability to pursue their aims to be aware of the likely response to the effect of political education being provided. It is likely to be disruptive, and there will be caution about it. It should only be attempted with a great deal of commitment. This sort of thing, if it works, will inform people and enable them to be more effective. Some*

people will not like it. It implies changes in the way in which people are able to tackle things in their area. It needs adequate resources. It is not the first time people have thought about it and we need to get it right next time. Liverpool has experienced every kind of national and local initiative aimed at doing something about the Inner City. We need to make it effective this time."

The trade unions provide an important forum for political education, although as Jim Mowatt, the Education Officer of the Transport and General Workers' Union, pointed out, most trade union education was instrumental (industrial relations, for example, and health and safety at work) and in the main only reached trade union representatives. However, unions have also been involved in courses for the unemployed, where he felt that the need for more political education was very great. The fact that very few employed people had any right to paid educational leave meant it was difficult to provide education directly for them; it had to be hoped that information would percolate through from union representatives who were able to attend courses. Despite these difficulties, Mr Mowatt felt that trade union education succeeded in reaching thousands of people, for many of whom it was their first experience of adult education and that *"for the vast majority of working class people their political education is through their involvement in trade unionism, its democracy, structure and institutions"*.

The Liverpool Council for Voluntary Service reported that lack of resources had forced them to cut back on their involvement in training in recent years. In the past they did quite a lot of work in this area; for example, they were involved in the *In our Liverpool home* project. Yet their work in co-ordinating and servicing local voluntary organisations has made them aware of the great need for political education. Experience has led them to believe that a large number of groups would benefit from opportunities to increase their skills and knowledge of the political process. They have found that members of voluntary organisations who sit as representatives on official bodies such as the Social Services Committee, the Youth and Community Sub-committee and the Community Health Council, often lack the understanding and confidence to deal with such bodies, particularly at first. To carry out their responsibilities more effectively they needed training about local government structures, and an understanding of, and ability to participate in, committee procedures.

Local voluntary groups with charitable status also needed an opportunity to explore their role in the political system; taking part in workshops and conferences would help them to understand and define their role. The smaller, locality-based community groups, which did not employ professionals, often had uneasy relationships with the local authority, and sometimes found difficulties in organis-

ing themselves. Increasing their knowledge of the political system would help them both to keep going and to work more effectively.

The Further Education Adviser in the Liverpool Local Education Authority acknowledged the need for political education. Whilst this area of work had rarely figured directly in adult education centre programmes, they did make a considerable contribution to laying the foundations for political education by providing for the acquisition of the basic educational skills and the confidence necessary to participation in political processes. He suggested that the LEA could also play a valuable part in co-ordinating a consortium of political education providers who could work together to serve the needs of the community, but in actually providing political education, the Responsible Bodies, which can operate from outside the political arena, were crucial. The initiatives should come from them.

Local organisations' views

Members of local organisations shared a concern that they were often at a disadvantage in their attempts to work effectively in political settings. They spoke of the frustration of repeatedly coming up against 'brick walls', and many people interviewed felt there was no straightforward way of getting information about such things as how to constitute yourself as a legal body, whom to approach for finance, or how to get issues raised. As a Gingerbread member observed: *"You often hear people say, well, write to your Councillor or your MP, but people often have no idea what the role of an MP or a Councillor is, let alone how to approach them"*.

Alex Bennett, a development worker at the Merseyside Community Relations Council, described the seemingly endless list of difficulties that groups encountered in organising themselves and in identifying the services they could use. Groups wanting to apply for charitable status, for example, could get stuck in a dense morass of legal requirements which it was very difficult to find a way through. *"You've just got to know the rules."* Yet it is extremely difficult to find out what the rules are and to understand fully the implications of taking certain steps. Community organisations also could have difficulties when they got to the stage of employing a professional worker and had to adjust to the role of being an employer. Uncertainty about dealing with such situations often led to conflict within groups and interfered with their ability to work effectively in furthering their aims.

Ruth Grosvenor, an education worker at Elimu Wa Nane (a black organisation set up to improve the adult education provision for local people) described vividly the sense of alienation which could build up. People cared deeply about the issues affecting their everyday lives, but they often gave up struggling to achieve things because of the frustrations involved: *"A few people are fighting for things, you've got*

to show there is hope for them. You come to brick walls every time you try to do things. People give up hope."

Meeting the educational needs of the unemployed is regarded by many in Liverpool as a priority. Local adult education institutions, such as the WEA, the Institute of Extension Studies, and the education section of the Transport and General Workers' Union, have contributed to courses in unemployed centres. There is general recognition of the need to extend this provision and of the importance of political education in any such programme. Those working in local unemployed centres feel there could be a place for people to develop their political understanding, gain insights into local and national issues and increase their ability to deal with practical problems in daily life. Political education is seen as important in providing the opportunity for unemployed people to acquire the skills and knowledge so as to campaign about the social issues which concern them. The relationship between adult education and movements for social change has often been emphasised, for example in the Russell Report, and is regarded as important by many people in unemployed groups. A paper prepared by the Education Action Group (a sub-group of the Merseyside) calls for an education which is *"resistant and questioning and a danger to fixed attitudes and ideas. It will be an education which probes, investigates and analyses We want education to be part and parcel of our fight for a decent society"*.

Groups with a largely middle-class membership experienced less difficulty in getting hold of the information they required, and commented less about the frustrations and obstacles in the path of achieving their aims. Nonetheless, they described very similar needs and problems in relation to political education. A member of the local Friends of the Earth group described their difficulties in finding out what legal structure would be best suited to their needs. He pointed out the advantages if groups could have some kind of forum where they could pool information and expertise.

A member of the 'Save Our City Campaign' (concerned with local environmental issues) noted that many people were often worried about local issues, but simply did not know what they could do. *"It is possible to get hold of information, but you have to know where to ask"*. When she joined the campaign to save the Lyceum she had not *"the slightest idea what to do or who to see or where to start"*.

Other groups with a predominantly middle-class, professional membership felt that the collective expertise of their members meant that they had little need to look for outside help. Paula Ridley, the Secretary of the Merseyside Civic Society (concerned with the conservation of the local environment), reported that they had been fortunate in attracting people who had considerable knowledge of

political structures and who were articulate and confident enough to approach local authority officers and councillors. *"It is difficult to refuse to reply to a Professor of Architecture, or not to answer the phone."* She felt that the basis of their success was that they did understand the political system and knew a number of local politicians, and that in order to achieve anything *"you have to go into the political arena"*. Most of their members had the experience to do this with confidence, many were involved in other activities which meant they had personal contacts in local government. For example one local society has a member who is a barrister and a former councillor. However, the Civic Society was sometimes approached by other groups for guidance and help, which suggests that they were at least aware that they lacked sufficient expertise in finding their way around the political world.

The Secretary of the local Conservation Society, Arthur Mackay, reiterated some of these points. They too had experienced no problems in finding out whom to approach for information, and usually found officials and elected members accessible and responsive when approached. It seemed, therefore, that those groups with professional expertise among their membership felt little need for the sort of additional educational resources which were demanded by those groups whose members have least access to such skills.

Most local community organisations felt the need for an education programme which would help them to function more effectively, both in their internal organisation and their external relations with other bodies. Almost all of those contacted had given little thought as to how their needs could be met, or as to the kind of education they would be looking for. The overriding impression was that they were more concerned about help over the particular problems they came up against, than with abstract political issues.

MEETING THE NEED

Development work

Since most organisations had no clearly worked-out view of how their needs could be met, it is apparent that development work would be important in establishing any successful programme of political education. The impression gained from the interviews was that the need manifested itself most often as a sense of frustration, rather than as an unsatisfied demand for someone to lay on political education courses.

The present providers of political education all stressed the importance of development work to enable groups to formulate their requirements and consider how they could be met. The Institute of Extension Studies Director, Professor Edwin Rhodes, reported that *"However many people seem to be involved in this field there is never*

any slack", and it is consequently almost impossible to respond immediately to demands, and only too possible for many requests to have to be refused. Officers in the Education Department thought it would be difficult to reach people through traditional, formal courses; what was needed was people who were able to go out and work with groups. The experience of the WEA was that traditional courses in politics did not 'catch on' and a more informal approach emphasising development work was required. Similar views were expressed at the Liverpool Council for Voluntary Service where it was suggested there was a need for a group of people who could go out to local organisations and help members to work on issues.

Although there are some staff, employed by different agencies, already working in this way, it was agreed that they lacked sufficient resources to cater for the scale of the need. In the WEA, for example, tutors had to fit such vital work in with their normal teaching load. There are also problems about recognising this kind of provision as educationally valid in its own right. For this to happen we have to get away from the notion of education as something which only takes place in a classroom to be measured in class contact hours and numbers of students. Development work, it was emphasised, is an important educative process in itself, which is not to deny that it does pose marginal problems such as how it can be evaluated.

Control

Another advantage of this approach is that it gives some measure of control to the people on the receiving end of provision. This can be important, particularly where the people concerned are alienated from traditional educational establishments. Too often education has been something 'done to' people, reinforcing their sense that it is distant and irrelevant to their own needs. By involving people in decisions about course format, content and structure, it is possible to find approaches which more closely fit their needs. It also reflects the aim of political education: to enable people to participate fully and gain more control over their own lives.

Meeting practical needs

Interviews with local groups made it clear that any political education must be a response to the specific problems which they faced. Again and again interviewees would return to their immediate concerns. How can we challenge the rise in fuel prices? How can we improve local nursery provision? How can we prevent the destruction of some local amenity? How can something be done about housing conditions? How can local health care be improved? Most crucially of all, the point returned to repeatedly during the interviews was that 'what people care about round here is jobs'.

The overwhelming impression, backed up by the experience of educational providers, was that educational responses must relate to practical problems faced by people. Education which was not relevant to these pressing concerns would be unlikely to produce much interest. The advice that *"you need to start where people are and with their own experience"* was confirmed in all the interviews. A worker at Home Link (an adult education project concerned with the needs of women) said *"People come in thinking their problems are individual ones, it is only later they see that they are general ones"*. There is no point in organising education around abstract issues when what people require is something related to their practical needs. Of course, starting with specific problems may well create a demand for more general issues to be tackled. A worker at the Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council Education Project observed *"When you have got a group already active around something it can lead on to more abstract issues"*. However, education deals with more than theories and concepts, and it is important not to undervalue the sort of provision aimed at immediate practical needs. Educators should accord people the respect of assuming that they actually know what they want.

Flexibility

The enquiry showed that political education provision would have to be flexible. Groups experiencing particular problems would not be able to wait months for their needs to be met. Resources would have to be available, both in workers' time (for a quick response to requests for help) and in accommodation and all the other facilities necessary to provide courses. Such a programme does not fit in with planning timetables months in advance, nor with regulations about minimum student numbers to make a class. The WEA reported that trying to provide this sort of flexibility stretched their resources beyond their limits, yet they felt this was the only way to fit provision adequately to meet the needs of people. The Institute of Extension Studies found that when a client group emerged, their need was usually immediate, so that the time scale normally involved in setting up a course was considerably foreshortened; and they simply did not have the slack which would allow them to respond.

Informality

There was unanimous agreement that political education should be provided in an informal context, particularly where members of groups are unused, or even hostile, to formal educational settings. Representatives of the Fostering Association, unemployed centres, local black organisations and Gingerbread, all said they thought people would be very reluctant to attend formal courses, but that Conferences and workshops (to disseminate information and allow people to share knowledge and skills) conducted in a relaxed and informal way would encourage people to take part with confidence.

Accessibility

A number of people suggested that the take-up for courses could be low because of difficulties of access: course fees, expensive travel costs, absence of child-care provision, and locating courses outside the local area, can exclude many potential participants.

Political education courses for those not in paid employment need to be free, with reimbursement of expenses incurred. In order to reach women, who are traditionally less likely to participate in the political process, good child-care facilities are needed and the timing of courses should fit in with their needs. This was strongly advocated by groups which mainly involve women, such as Gingerbread, the Foster Parent Association and Home Link.

There was also a firmly expressed need for education to be based locally. It was frequently argued that neighbourhood courses would increase their accessibility and that venues such as local community centres should be used. Poor public transport and resistance to attending institutions where people do not feel at home, could otherwise prove a barrier to potential students. Members of local black groups particularly stressed that many people were reluctant to travel to institutions which were, in every sense of the word, distant.

Any serious attempt to provide political education should surely concern itself with its availability to the very people who are most alienated from existing structures and least able to benefit from present provision by ensuring them ease of access.

CONCLUSIONS

The study has revealed a great deal of support for increasing the provision of political education to community organisations. Present providers were unable to find the resources to respond to the existing scale of need. Members of local groups were interested in an education programme which would help them deal with practical difficulties.

Few groups had considered how their needs could be met. There was clearly a need for development work to help them map out the details of the political education required. It would not be adequate to assume that all groups would be able to inform a tutor in detail of their educational needs. Simply to say 'do you want any political education provided?' might well meet with a straightforward negative as people do not necessarily define their needs in such terms. What they do express is a sense of not having the information and skills to participate in the political process and their sense of frustration at the way this limits their capacity to work effectively. This sense of alienation may indeed lead them to the expression of feelings that there is no point in even trying to acquire such skills and that it is a

waste of time trying to use the democratic structures open to them. Development work offers the opportunity to build up trust and confidence and to see education as a gradual process enabling people to identify the ways they could improve their effectiveness by increasing their participatory skills.

Given the concern of groups with practical issues, it would clearly be vital to start by responding flexibly to those concerns. While these approaches, and those designed to increase the accessibility of provision, are more costly than traditional courses, present providers and members of community groups agreed that they would be important to the success of any initiatives. An example of good practice which embodies these elements is the Parent Support Scheme, which has established seventeen groups in local schools, with another ten centres planned. They have drawn in people who would not normally attend adult education institutions. As one of their organisers claimed: *"We have not been pushed into moulds and ten-week courses and what constitutes a class. People just came along. It is free, neighbourhood-based, happens in school-time, and people can bring their kids along."*

These findings suggest that particular attention could most usefully be given to the following conclusions:

- More attention needs to be given to the political education of the members of local community organisations. The complexity of the political situation within which they have to operate often leaves them at a distinct disadvantage. The resultant lack of effectiveness and discouragement is serious for them, and has grave implications for any society anxious to make its democratic structures work.
- Political disadvantage is not distributed equally. As a consequence some local groups experience a much greater sense of powerlessness than others. Particular attention should be paid to making educational provision available to people in this disadvantaged position. Ease of access to education is vital: this means removing financial barriers to attendance, providing child-care facilities, ensuring any provision is informal in approach and neighbourhood-based. Black people and women, for example, have traditionally been under-represented in political structures and are often alienated from political processes. The educational needs of such groups should be a priority.
- Additional resources are required to ensure that political education needs are met, and that they are met in ways which encourage the widest possible participation. Existing agencies find it very difficult to provide a fully responsive programme, beleaguered as they are by financial and other problems.
- Any narrow definition of education can restrict agencies to providing traditional, institution-based courses. Agencies need to be able to

- work flexibly and to respond to urgent requests for help, unhampered by regulations about class size and course duration.
- There is great scope for development work with groups, which present workers in this field are unable to undertake because of inadequate resources. Such work needs to be recognised as an intrinsic and necessary part of educational provision.
 - Political education should be based on people's expressed needs. This will probably lead to an extension of provision around practical matters of immediate concern, rather than abstract issues.
 - Examples of co-operation and co-ordination among adult education bodies, and between them and community organisations, should be built on. This requires resources to allow interested groups to get together and work on joint initiatives. The ideal response would be to fund a small team of development workers to go out and work with groups, and map their political education needs. They would be able to call on the experience, skills and facilities of the various agencies as required, and co-ordinate efforts to bring about a flexible and open programme of political education.
 - The political education needs of the unemployed should be a priority. This could be provided through unemployed groups and centres. The needs of young unemployed people could be partly met by exploring ways of providing political education to trainees on MSC schemes.
 - In the longer term paid educational leave should be made available to all adults to allow equal opportunity of acquiring the skills and knowledge which make it possible to play a full part in the community.

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The MSC's 1982 document on the *New Youth Training Initiative* calls for a broad approach to meeting the educational needs of young people, rather than a narrow, vocationally-defined one. It could be argued that such a broad education should include understanding how the political system works and information about how to participate in it in a full and positive way. It seems important, therefore, that political education should be part of the education offered to young people on such schemes.

APPENDIX: SIZE OF THE DEMAND

One of the research objects was to identify the scale of demand for political education. This proved difficult because the demand has not necessarily been recognised or articulated by all local community groups. In the view of the providers the potential demand is enormous. To give some indication of its scale, a list of some of the community organisations in one postal area of Liverpool, Liverpool 8, is given below. It cannot but have omissions.

Neighbourhood community organisations

Abercromby Neighbourhood Projects Group
Canning Area Residents' Association
Dingle (Flats) Tenants' Association
Harrington Neighbourhood Council
Harrowby/Kimberley Residents' Association
Liverpool Rathbone Community Association
Lodge Lane East Residents' Association
Menzie's Area Residents' Association
Princes Park and Granby Community Council
Princes Park Society (address Liverpool 17)
Princes Park Residents' Association
Rialto Neighbourhood Council
Roseberry Estate Residents' Group
Shorefields Residents' Association
Southern Neighbourhood Council
South Granby Residents' Association
Toxteth Community Council
Welsh Streets Residents' Group
Windsor View Residents' Association

Black and overseas community organisations

Charles Wootton Centre for Adult Education
Cross River State Community
English Born Blacks
Ghana Union Social Club
The Greek Community
Ibo Union of Liverpool
Liverpool 8 Action Committee
Liverpool 8 Arts and Crafts
Liverpool Muslim Society
Merseyside Asians Social and Cultural Organisation
Merseyside Caribbean Council
Merseyside Somali Community Association
National Union of Nigeria
Pakistan Association of Liverpool
Sierra Leone Social Club
Yoruba Social Club

Community centres

Belvidere Youth and Community Centre
Dingle Community Centre
Florence Institute
Harding Community Centre
Home Link — Granby

Ironbridge Youth and Community Centre
Leighton View Play Complex
Lodge Lane East Community Centre
Merseyside Caribbean Council Community Centre
Pakistan Association Youth and Community Council
Princes Park Community Centre
Rialto Community Centre
Sir Joseph Cleary Community Centre
Solway Street Community Centre
The Warwick Centre

Welfare rights

Merseyside Rights to Fuel Action Group

Homelessness

Merseyside CHAR (Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless)

Disability

Merseyside Centre for the Deaf

Chapter Nine

THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

by Walter James

This chapter on the 'European context' focuses on the politicisation of adult education and the resultant political education of adults rather than the more restricted focus of the teaching of political education, for it is in this aspect that sharp contrasts arise with British policy and practice. An appendix indicates some of those features of the British system, and the underlying bases for them, which are in sharpest contrast with developments in Europe.

My views derive from involvement from 1977 to 1981 in the Council of Europe project on *The Development of Adult Education* and my present activities as Project Adviser and Chairman of the new project on *Adult Education for Development*. The considerable degree of support for the new project indicates more surely than any other analysis the direction in which adult education is going.

The use of adult education for development purposes is no longer a phenomenon to be observed mainly in the less developed Third World countries; the need for the redevelopment of political, economic, social, and cultural life in what were previously thought be 'advanced' societies has created new imperatives for the provision of adult education. Of course, there are notional differences; but these tend increasingly to be differences of degree, not kind.

Underlying aims

Where adult education is primarily going is towards the adoption of affecting people's *performance in life* as its prime aim. It goes beyond a concern merely for performance in the classroom. It abandons the optimistic and often unrealistic hope that what is learned in educational settings will be transferred to other arenas of life. It is less and less motivated to provide adult education as a leisure-time opiate for those whose lives are unsatisfactory.

Resource constraints accelerate this re-orientation of adult education: the practice of adding the new on to existing provision is no longer economically feasible, and decisions about priorities are increasingly decisions about enabling one kind of provision to wither and die in order that a new provision can be born and live.

Adult education increasingly is *recurrent* during life, *continuing* throughout life, *permanent* with life; and it is these life-related aspects that are increasingly emphasised. The terms have come to denote the central quality of adult education, and not merely its duration and frequency.

Overall there is a shift towards globalisation; a movement which is still distant from its goals, but moves towards making two characteristics dominant: building education into the elements of everyday life, instead of setting it apart; and deliberately using education as a means whereby people act on their environment. When these two characteristics are represented as dimensions and present typologically, the following matrix results:

	Separate from life	Integrated with life
Not deliberately providing a means for acting on the environment	I	II
Deliberately providing a means for acting on the environment	III	IV

Position I is increasingly being moved away from. Though not inhabited entirely by an institution or system it casts a spell over much that is done. It is the position of an idealised academic contemplative model, pursued in isolation both from the world and from action.

Position II still characterises much on-the-job training in industrial and commercial situations. Though integrated with working life, its intention is customarily to fit the person to the job environment, and not to fit the job to the person. Though its advocates were reinforced by interpretations of Skinnerian psychology and programmed learning techniques, its rationale has been increasingly questioned as the cruder elements of division of labour have been seen to be not merely suspect in human and social terms, but counter-profitable economically.

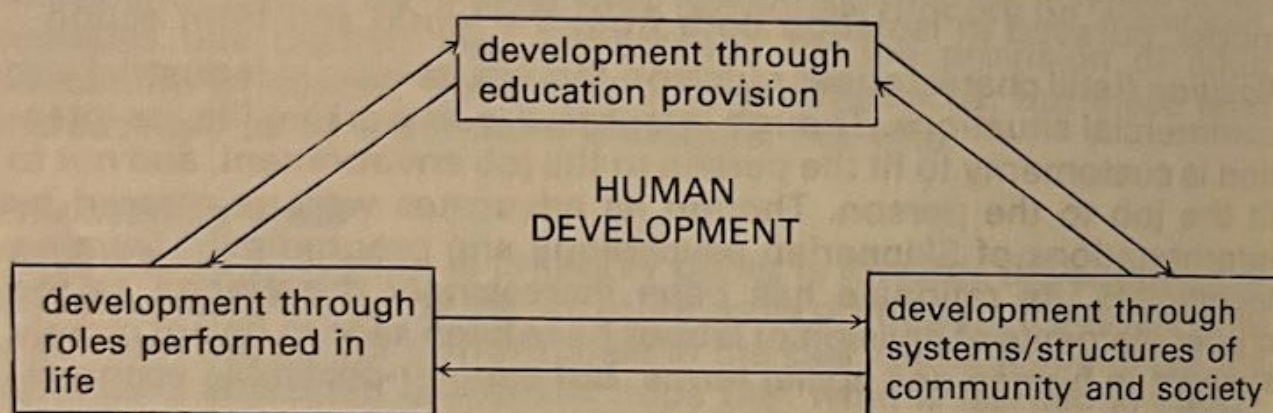
Position III is the position of much professional training. It equips people to act on the environment — other people's environment; but by segregating its constituency from so much of life (and sometimes from other students), it produces and reinforces behaviour which can be more responsive to professional peer-group norms than the needs which are supposed to be served. This position in professional education is being increasingly questioned, the more it comes to be recognised that though professionals profess many things, their common profession is often that they know better than those they are supposed to serve.

Position IV is one to which increasingly many are travelling hopefully, but few have yet arrived. It is a position more of us in education will

have to inhabit. It will be a journey into largely uncharted territory where the natives are not thought to be particularly friendly, and 'here there be dragons' is a prescription from the wise, rather than a description from the ignorant.

An adult education which increasingly moves towards the globalised position and deserts the others has to develop new understandings and relationships if it is to fulfil the new functions it seeks to perform. The most significant of these is that human development is affected by a complex of forces. Just as 'staff development' in enterprises and organisations recognises that performance deficits can be remedied by the *inter-action of training provision with job development and organisational development*, so it more consciously comes to be recognised that human development is affected not merely by the educational provision available to human beings, but also, and often primarily, by the roles which human beings are allocated and by the systems and structures of the society and community which, among other things, allocate roles to their members. Human development is therefore more likely to be furthered when these three developments (through education, through role and through systems and structures) interact and relate.

Person development is therefore increasingly seen to be but one of a triangle of forces, all of which need to be acted upon.



In all cases therefore the adult educator pays increasing attention to whether the crippling of human development can be most effectively eradicated or reduced by changing the roles which persons perform, and/or changing the social system under which they operate, as well as by making specific educational provision. Indeed in some cases it is apparent that educational development of many kinds is impossible until the other kinds of development have preceded it. More educators are becoming convinced that a priority for adult education is directly to enable persons to transform the roles they play and the societies and communities in which they play them. People's educational development is seen to be more effectively furthered the more they are involved in the other two developments.

Consequences for practice

There is then the increasing adoption of *performance in life* objectives, and an increasing recognition that these will not be attained unless the adult educator seeks to develop not only persons, but also the roles they play and the systems which affect their relationships. This twin emphasis is altering the constituency and the curriculum of adult education, and the modes by which it is planned and administered, and the bases of professional conduct within it.

A full discussion of all these features is precluded by the space available, and in any case all of them are the logical outcomes of the underlying aims which have been discussed. To list these features has the additional advantage that their range and their relationship can be more clearly observed. These transformations though all interrelated are also more likely to be stimulated and more energetically pursued as a result of two complementary forces: the perspective adult education has towards life (the outward perspective) and the perspective which it has towards itself (the inward perspective).

The outward perspective

The main dimensions of development would appear to be a much greater involvement with the giving of priority to:

- a constituency whose performance in life is least adequate;
- a curriculum which seeks to aid their development, and that of other people's, not merely by educating them as individuals, but attempting also to enable them to secure different roles for themselves in society, and to seek to change the economic, political and social systems which marginalise or restrict them.

The observable features of such a curriculum are that:

- it is recognised that life is not only the arena where knowledge and skills have to be applied, but that life is also the arena where knowledge and skills, if they are to be relevant, have to be acquired; and it therefore produces shifts in the knowledge and skills base of adult education:
 - a shift from knowledge organised and created by others, to knowledge organised and created by persons out of their situation;
 - a shift from knowledge mediated by others, to knowledge acquired at first hand from life;
 - a shift from knowledge and skills acquisition which then has to be applied, to knowledge and skill acquisitions through problem solving in life;
 - a shift from knowledge and skills acquired by individuals, to knowledge and skills acquired through and by the group which maximises their production and their application;

- it attempts to secure action on those features of life which limit performance (e.g. division of labour, urbanisation, depersonalisation, bureaucracy, sexual stereotyping);
- it attempts to act upon the ways in which human beings seek to use their continually extended powers, particularly when the use of those powers appears at best highly questionable, at worst massively wrong (e.g. energy policy, ecology, armaments, the relationships to the Third World);
- it is directly concerned to create in life:
 - values that are not merely personal, but are also social and political;
 - behaviour that is not merely private, but is also public;
 - a scope of concern that is not merely local, but is also global;
 - an ethical motivation that is satisfied not merely by charity, but works also for justice;
- it engages directly with life through such processes as:
 - the raising of critical consciousness by which persons are helped to recognise the extent to which the life they live does not meet their needs and to take action to remedy the situation;
 - advocacy for a constituency whose own voice might not be powerful enough to secure change;
 - the creation of enclaves where alternative life-styles can be practised (e.g. co-operatives, alternative sectors of employment, centres of education which are also centres of production).

The operation of such a curriculum appears to be facilitated by:

- a planning process which relates adult education agencies both statutory and voluntary with non-educational agencies in joint approaches to social policy, relating educational, social, economic and political development to each other;
- an administrative process which co-ordinates and makes inter-dependent the provision of services which in the past have often been separate;
- professional behaviour which blurs the distinction between adult educators and other professional workers (e.g. in crossing the boundaries between educator, social worker, cultural animator, and economic entrepreneur as occasion demands) and between professional worker and volunteer;
- the deliberate recruitment as adult educators of those who are activists in social and community affairs;
- the deliberate recruitment as adult educators of those who know from their own experience the life situation of their students.

The inward perspective

This chapter has attempted to indicate the more important consequent transformations and characteristics of adult education in Europe produced by the increasing adoption of *performance in life* objectives. Those which have been indicated so far derive from the *outward perspective* that adult education has to adopt towards life as its concern for the development of the person involves it more and more in: developing the roles which people can play in life; and developing the institutions, structures and systems which affect the way people live.

There is also a complementary *inward perspective* that adult education has to adopt towards itself: and in its concern for the development of persons, adult education has also had to be concerned with the extent to which it frustrates or fosters the human developments it seeks to bring about by the roles it assigns to adults as students and learners, and its own organisational structures, institutions and systems.

So there are trends towards:

- the involvement of communities in adult education policy making, at the institutional level primarily, and at other levels;
- the involvement of students in the management of institutions;
- the development of programmes and institutions which do not perpetuate and increase educational disadvantage;
- the development of curricular content and processes which encourage learner self-management and autonomy;
- the development of measures for providing financial aid to adult students;
- increasing the priority given to adult students in admission to institutions which formerly restricted their access.

Conclusion

Many countries in Europe are moving towards more globalised positions in adult education and are consequently also in an intermediary stage between an adult education concentrated, sometimes almost exclusively, on individuals and their personal deficiencies, and an adult education also concerned with mobilising and raising critical collective consciousness to transform the social, political, cultural and economic systems which create some of the problems individuals face. The organisational structures, administrative arrangements, curriculum, staffing and other resources of adult education which this transition requires are at present only partly developed, but their further development seems certain given the aims which adult education is coming increasingly to have.

APPENDIX: CONTRASTS

When I look at the adult education programme of my local community college, or even at the total programme of the local education authority, I am made acutely aware that it ignores many, if not most, of the serious issues which face human beings in this country at the present time. This particular community college and local education authority are not atypical in my experience.

Much of the provision of adult education in England and Wales has been predominantly concerned with helping people to leisure-time pursuits, or enabling them to modify their domestic lives. Our society stands in considerable need of learning to transform the relationships which we have with our fellow human beings and with the world's natural resources. Human beings now control much that in the past was left to chance or fate. Less and less does life appear to be in the lap of the gods; more and more it is shaped by the hands of human beings. Human beings now make choices, where, before, the only choice was to submit. A social education curriculum becomes more, not less of an imperative, the more that technologically capable humanity extends its powers of control and capacity for choice.

The predominantly domestic provision not only limits the scope of concern of the adult educator, but within even that limited frame of reference it has ignored areas of considerable need. Classes in *Continental Cookery* are obviously not designed for those who have real problems in feeding themselves and their families; and courses in *Home Decorating* tend to be provided for those whose homes are already well decorated. Adult education busy with its own lore and law has passed by on the other side of a culture gulf from those who have the greatest nutritional deficiencies and those who inhabit inadequate environments.

It is true that the Russell Report⁽⁵⁶⁾ encouraged the development of adult education for the disadvantaged; but it proposed that this be *added* to the existing provision. The Russell Committee recognised that there were some people who, when economies were being sought, disparaged the provision of "*classes in bridge, golf and entertaining in the home*". Its verdict "*we do not subscribe to these disparagements*" wrote the epitaph to any wide-scale consideration of relative priorities during the Seventies; and has left us with the legacy of a moral vacuum on which to construct the priorities of the Eighties.

The seven fat years since the Russell Report's publication in 1973 came to an end with the Seventies, and Auden's words ring truer than when he wrote them: "*Tomorrow is another country/We do things differently there*".

But it will not be just the balance of the curriculum that we shall need to strike differently: the Russell Report recommendations on education for the disadvantaged indicate another constraint which English adult education has put on itself and of which it needs to divest itself in the Eighties.

The Russell Committee defined adult education for the deprived as "*access to creative and recreational pursuits that bring fulfilment and counter the dehumanising effects of a deprived environment*". This equates more with the consolation of the opiate and the anodyne, than with a direct contribution to rendering the environment less deprived. Adult education for the deprived is aimed to "*give the deprived knowledge about welfare and rights*" and is apparently to stop short of that valuable learning experience which the deprived receive when they try to obtain the welfare and the right which they know about, but are deprived of. Community education is restricted to "*providing the background knowledge and understanding upon which effective action for community purposes can be founded*". The assumption here is that community action is subsequent to and not integral with the educational experience.

Such attitudes have a long history. The statement made in 1947 at the beginning of Ministry of Education *Pamphlet No. 8, Further Education* set the tone for the post-war reconstruction of adult education and in it further education is advocated, not merely for work but also for leisure, on the grounds that "*on the degree of maturity we achieve in our private lives depends in the last analysis the quality of our civilisation*".

It has become increasingly obvious since those words were written that the quality of our civilisation depends also to a considerable extent on the degree of maturity we achieve in our *public* lives. What is also increasingly apparent is that the achievement of maturity in our private lives does not automatically lead to maturity in our public lives. Private and public increasingly appear to be independent variables. (For instance, many people would hold to the *personal* value of thrift, and in their *private* behaviour carefully save items others would throw away; and yet many of these people belong to the most profligate and wasteful society the world has ever known without any sense of contradiction or even of paradox.) There is a disfunction between *private* and *public* behaviour and between the *personal* and the *social/political* values which inform attitudes and behaviour.

Underlying the provision of adult education there is the assumption or set of related assumptions — sometimes explicitly stated, but often and more potently implicitly inferred as part of the received tradition — that the business of adult education is solely with the individual, primarily with the private, and should eschew action-based learning in social and political studies. It is a self-denying and self-limiting ordinance that adult education has now to liberate itself from. But in order to do so it may have to take into account some comparable limitations of political education in the school system.

I do not know whether the limitations on adult social and political studies owe something to the tradition of such studies in the schooling system. Some changes have occurred in the school curriculum for political education, but they have similar limits to them. Less and less emphasis is now given to the mechanics and logistics of the parliamentary democratic process, and more and more attention is paid to the concepts which interpenetrate political attitudes and behaviour. So, for example, pupils are more likely to be taught less about the processes whereby bills process through both Houses of Parliament, and to be taught more about such concepts as power, liberty, etc.

But even with this curriculum development there is a reluctance to relate the concepts to the pupils' own experience, and to encourage them to take interventionist action.

So a class may well learn about the constraints on the power of the executive or be able to contrast the powers of the President of the USA with the powers of the Prime Minister of the UK. What it is unlikely to study is the power of the head teacher and other teachers, the power of parents and the power of peer groups. It is even less likely to study these topics by action-based programmes designed to increase learning and understanding by attempting to change the allocation, distribution and exercise of such power.

This distancing and passivity of political studies is, to some extent, curious. Geography, for instance, eschews the macro until concepts have been established through such activities as drawing plans of the classroom. Mathematical concepts are established through a close study initially of the characteristics of pupils, teachers, family and friends and the immediate environment. Similarly school studies have become less passive as well as less distant. Science pupils, for instance, are spending less of their time observing the demonstrations of teachers and performing experiments devised by others. They spend more of their time devising hypotheses and developing methods whereby such hypotheses can be tested. The characteristics of the so-called 'practical subjects' are more likely to be creativity and design rather than regulation and standardisation. But the teaching of the human sciences stands aside from these developments or constrains them within the personal and the charitable. Thus personal community service activities are more widespread now than at any time in the past; but

collectively defending the interests of those served and intervening in public affairs to secure better treatment for them is considered to be beyond the educational pale. That this scholastic/individualist tradition persists in the present situation is a sign of its strength; for more than ever we now recognise that vandalism, violence and other behaviour labelled delinquent may have some of their roots in the limitations to the enfranchisement of young people.

If there has been one movement above all others in curriculum development, it has been that in which pupils are less likely merely to *learn about* and more likely to *learn to be*. Less likely, for instance, to learn about mathematics and physics, and more likely to learn to be a mathematician and a physicist. And yet the politics curriculum in schools is still more concerned with learning about politics than learning to be a politician.



Chapter Ten

POLITICAL EDUCATION FOR ADULTS IN FRANKFURT

by Torsten Böhmer

This chapter is derived from a research report prepared by Torsten Böhmer for the Advisory Council, at the request of Professor Ridley of the University of Liverpool, under the supervision of Professor Meueler of the University of Mainz, and with the financial help of the Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society. Mr Böhmer's full report, translated from the original German by Bruni Schling, has been published separately by the Advisory Council under the title 'Political Education for Adults in Frankfurt: Structure of Provision and Demand'. The shortened version which follows here was prepared by Joyce Berney.

The Advisory Council was particularly interested in obtaining some information about political education provision in West Germany because the concepts of Politische Bildung and the Arbeit und Leben programme have often been cited in Britain as evidence of the greater concern for 'education in democracy' in post-war West Germany than anywhere else in Western Europe. The Council therefore thought it would be useful to seek some measure of the current validity of that comparison in the light of a local study of current provision.

Political education for adults can be the result of a public commitment to the concerns and problems of the community, arising from a sense of shared responsibility; it can also result from attendance at a course or seminar on such issues. Both processes usually occur in the context of a group and follow some kind of plan. The consequences for the individual cannot be precisely determined in either case. However, in this chapter only those topics which are dealt with in educational courses are regarded, by definition, as adult political education.

The study described in this chapter examines the relationship between two different aspects of learning in the political education of adults. It investigates the forms of co-operation between active, politically committed groups of citizens and the established or potential providers of adult education; it also looks at the obstacles to mutually profitable co-operation among the groups.

The study, confined to the city of Frankfurt-am-Main, focuses on the following demographically significant 'target groups' in the city's population: the unemployed, the elderly, women and local action groups. Pressure of time limited the enquiry work to a relatively small sample of representative views from these groups.

Research method

The first step was a content analysis of course prospectuses and other relevant literature. Then followed interviews with tutors running political education courses specifically for these target groups or of direct relevance to them. For the interviews, a nine-page questionnaire was used, with some open-ended questions. Discussions were also held with directors, principals and senior staff of establishments active in the field of political education for adults. The primary aim was to obtain information on: the institutions' educational goals and the interests of participants; the institutions' previous and current contacts with groups engaged in political and public activities; the potential needs of these groups for co-operation with adult educators.

Action groups were then interviewed, using a four-page questionnaire mainly concerned with:

- problems of group-work which require specialist educational help;
- the extent of information about and experience of adult education facilities;
- requirements for the planning and running of relevant courses;
- knowledge and skills commonly considered desirable by the groups in their public and political activities.

The questionnaires were only used as a substitute for talks with the respective groups. Initial talks with a group of unemployed people led to the researcher's participation and observation over a period of two months.

Seventy questionnaires were sent out to the selected course tutors via their employers. However, only a few of the questionnaires actually reached their destination since the Frankfurt Adult Education Bureau collected all the questionnaires and withheld them for a month without informing either the sender or the addressees.

Two church organisations refused co-operation on the grounds that they were not involved in political education (despite their provision of courses on *Women and work* and *Senior citizens*). Two further institutions refrained from co-operation for other reasons. Therefore only about a third of the questionnaires reached the tutors, and only three were filled in and returned. Two of these related to adult education with women's groups and the third to work in urban renewal.

The authorities at the Frankfurt Adult Education Bureau apparently did not wish Volkshochschule (Folk high school — LEA adult education centre) staff to discuss the issues raised in the questionnaire. In spite of telephone calls and requests for interviews, the only co-operation offered was a discussion on administration and finance with the

Bureau's director and interviews with Bureau staff on administration and statistics. No other organisation responded in this negative way.

Fortunately, there was a far better response from the groups of elderly people, women, and unemployed persons and the action groups which were contacted: two women's groups responded in writing and two groups of unemployed people gave oral replies. Another group of unemployed people offered the chance of observing their preparatory work for the first nationwide congress of the unemployed in West Germany.

Adult education legislation

Adult education, because of West Germany's federal structure, is administered by the regional governments, the *Laender*, except for vocational education provided by companies and associations, which is subject to national legislation. That part of adult education which is the province of the *Laender* is defined as being open to all adults, irrespective of previous education, social status, occupation, nationality or religion. The law lays down that even education aimed at specific groups must maintain this open accessibility.

The work of the Volkshochschule (VHS) is simply referred to as adult education; industry and the trade unions offer vocationally oriented further education, while the churches engage in social and family education.

The Law on Adult Education which was passed in the Land-parliament of Hesse in 1970 states that *"It is the goal of adult education to enable adults and adolescents to broaden, renew and to deepen their knowledge and skills so that they can meet the requirements of their occupation and social activities. Adult education comprises general and vocational further education"*.

At the same time, a further law was passed which entitled all employees under 26 to an annual week's leave on full pay in order to attend full-time courses in 'political education and vocational further education'. The law continues, in Section 1: *"Vocational further education will enable the employee to maintain, improve and broaden the standard of his vocational qualifications and general knowledge and at the same time help him to understand the social structure and thus his position at work and in society"*.

In Hesse the integration of vocational and political education is still in its infancy and is making slow progress because of the complicated regulations in the vocational education sector.

Frankfurt and its population

Frankfurt's development was similar to that of Liverpool, as a city of trade and commerce rather than industry. In contrast to Liverpool,

however, this development is not now in decline. Frankfurt is today the most economically powerful city in West Germany. The municipal administration's budget plan for 1983 amounts to DM 267 million.

The population of the city has decreased over the last ten years, from 678,000 in 1972 to 629,900 in 1981, a drop of 7.6%. This 'flight from the city', mainly by better-off families with children, has led to old people, foreigners, unemployed, poor and single people forming a disproportionately large part of the remaining population.

The elderly — This is the only group among the West German population which has consistently increased over the last ten years. Today 22% of the population are over 65, while the number of children under 5 has gone down by 60% in the last fifteen years.

Foreigners — The influx of foreign citizens and their high birth-rate has done little to offset the age imbalance of the city's population.

The poor — Frankfurt's expenditure on social service payments per head of the population was about three times higher than that of adjacent communities. Because of structural growth in permanent unemployment, more and more people each year are receiving supplementary benefit. Nine per cent of the administration budget was spent on welfare benefits in 1982.

Single people — One person households were the only ones in the last ten years to show an increase.

The extent of the social homogenisation in the inner city is amply demonstrated by the fact that 85% of the population in the Station, Gutleut and Gallus districts consists of old people and foreigners. Ten years ago they made up only half of the population there.

In spite of these trends, the number of motor vehicles registered in the city has gone up by 50% over the last fifteen years. The problems of traffic control and town planning arising from this are acute, but the authorities appear to regard citizens' participation in environmental planning as an obstacle.

Fourth sector of the state education system

Up to the end of 1976 there were two independent Volkshochschulen in Frankfurt. The Frankfurter Volkshochschule provided mainly for the inner city area, and the VHS Frankfurt-Hoechst worked predominantly in the industrial district in the west of the city. At the end of 1976 the two VHS were amalgamated to become the municipal Frankfurt Bureau for Adult Education. The guiding principles for its work were to remain open to all people and members of staff, all topics and methods. While the VHS was to be open to specific group interests, it had to remain "in its aims and its structure independent of group interests of any kind. Its goal is the creation of equal opportunity".

Shortly after the VHS had been municipalised, there was a shift in the party-political composition of the local council and responsibility for adult education was transferred from the cultural department to the department of education.

The Bureau for Adult Education is composed of three departments: administration, Volkshochschule, and the 'Seminar for politics'. The latter is concerned with the development of projects for target groups in the field of youth/adult education outside the school sector. These projects are validated by specialist observers and advisers.

Adult education by the Volkshochschule

In West Germany the concept of political education for adults has not developed as a distinct and separate idea, but rather as an aspect of the wider notion of *Bildung*. The critical concept of *Bildung* implies the attainment of intellectual independence and a spirit of critical enquiry — not only in the arts and sciences, but also in politics, society, economy and technology. Political *Bildung* seeks to enable individuals to come to a rational self-determination of their place in society through their participation in the political decisions affecting them. As such, it stands in opposition to that concept of education which has traditionally compartmentalised isolated subjects and areas of learning, such as general vocational and political education. This led Mr H Hoffmann, the Head of the Department of Culture in Frankfurt, to define adult education as *"a comprehensive unit of education helping people in their occupation, in the development of their individual personality and in the field of democracy"*.

This comprehensive concept of education found its expression in the principles and goals of adult education in Hesse, which, in 1971, were translated into policy regulations by the Hessische Volkshochschulverband. These state that the provision of political education of adults should cover the following areas, explicitly referred to as interdependent:

- the socio-political area;
- the area of specialised theoretical and scientific activities;
- the area of relating to work and occupations;
- the area of leisure.

The regulations also require that there should be provision for separate study groups, responsive to current needs, and opportunities for public debate on all controversial issues. They also specify that *"the provision shall also enable the individual to use his acquired knowledge and skills independently and to create, by strengthening his will for change, personal space for himself which is free of functional pressures"*.

These principles were enlarged on in 1973 by a concept of the 'synthesis of vocational and political education', which was put into practice in the development of 'work-related' educational opportunities for people with similar social backgrounds and work experience. The intention was to open up new occupational perspectives for them. At the same time, the introduction of this educational provision would represent a step forward in the democratic development of the middle-class Volkshochschule.

Over the past seven years, however, the process of planning and shaping such provision has slowed down. What remains of this initiative is, at most, a greater concern for educational work with target groups. Thus the traditional compartmentalisation into subjects now stands side by side with a structural division relating to target groups.

Two of the nine sub-departments of the VHS which are clearly concerned with target groups are 'Languages and further education courses for foreigners' and 'Senior citizens'. Responsibility for political education is shared between two further sub-departments: 'Work and life/Society and politics' and 'General studies'. Since 1982, courses on politico-historical topics have been the responsibility of the latter, while the former has undertaken political education related to specific target groups — sometimes in collaboration with other departments. The previously mentioned wish to do away with subject boundaries and to integrate the separate fields of education has made it difficult to maintain rigid boundaries between particular departments.

'Work and life/Society and politics' study group

This department is the only one within the VHS concerned exclusively with political education. It exists, in fact, in the form of a study group of the German Trades Union Congress (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund or DGB) and the Frankfurt VHS, and is known as 'Work and Life' (Arbeit und Leben). It offers:

- general courses and study groups on political education (at present limited in number);
- provision for target groups through, for example: seminars and study groups in co-operation with the DGB unions in certain areas; study groups for the unemployed; seminars for families; study groups, weekend seminars and educational leave courses for young people; study groups and seminars for migrant workers; weekend seminars for people in employment;
- study groups and in-service training for staff.

The local Arbeit und Leben study group was founded at the same time as the Land study group for Hesse in Frankfurt, in 1950. Since 1972, the established provision of a more general educational nature has increasingly been supplemented by political education courses for

target groups. Like all other VHS provision, these courses are open to anyone, irrespective of religion, politics or professional status. This accessibility makes the DGB an ideal partner for co-operation with the VHS in bringing political education to educationally disadvantaged groups. This provision takes into account the work, interests and circumstances of employees and their families.

The programme is determined by the board of directors of Arbeit und Leben, which is made up of equal numbers from the DGB and the VHS. Financial support for the local groups comes from the trade unions, the VHS and the Hesse Arbeit und Leben group.

The courses on political education which the group held in 1981 represented nearly 4% of the total provision in this field. For statistical purposes, 5.8% of the VHS provision was also listed under the heading 'Society and politics' although two-thirds of these courses dealt with the subject in an interdisciplinary way. A closer look at the statistics reveals that it was really Arbeit und Leben which, with two-thirds of the total provision, made the largest contribution in the field of political education.

In November 1977 the VHS Association for Hesse celebrated twenty-five years of 'harmonious co-operation' with Arbeit und Leben. Yet in January 1978 a note of discord was struck when a newly appointed head of the Frankfurt Education Department took a different political direction. He wished to see the existing study groups complemented by "*other social groups, such as those representing crafts and employers*".⁽⁵⁷⁾ Another attack was launched soon afterwards: the group should be responsible for only part of the provision of the 'Society and politics' department — the rest was to be the responsibility of the VHS, under the supervision of the local authority. Eventually this plan was dropped on the grounds that the Department of General Studies could take over more courses in political education.

The Group was in for another conflict when two of the political parties represented on the local council put forward a proposal for the introduction of attendance fees. Hitherto, Arbeit und Leben's courses had been open free of charge. Since the DGB had not been consulted on this, it issued a public statement of its opposition to the scheme. However, when the new director of the Frankfurt Adult Education Bureau took office in April 1980, the road seemed to be clear for the introduction of attendance fees.

Apart from the introduction of fees, the head of the Education Department brought in the following regulations, via the Adult Education Bureau, effectively removing all powers from the directors of Arbeit und Leben: suggestions for the programme were not to be admitted for discussion without the prior consent of the head of the Education Department or the Bureau; a minimum of fifteen partici-

pants was set for all VHS classes; topics for study groups and seminars which were cancelled due to insufficient attendance were not to be offered again.

The last regulation led to the cancellation of six courses, among them courses dealing with National Socialism and Neo-Fascism. Another six courses were rejected because of allegations of politically biased content. All of them had intended to tackle topical issues which are the focus of public debate and concern and of popular movements. Four of the rejected courses had intended to deal with the subject of peace (e.g. *Peace and disarmament — unrealistic dreams or our sole chance of survival?*). The remaining topics were to be *Children of migrant workers*, *Squatting and the rule of law*, the American study *Global 2000*, *Destruction of jobs — a necessary consequence of international competition?*, *Runway West — job security versus protection of the environment* and *Public savings — who will pay the bill and how does it balance?*. Yet another course, *Nuclear power — superfluous?*, was allegedly run too often and it, too, was cancelled.

Arbeit und Leben was left with only the courses for particular target groups. In due course, attendance fees were abolished again, but the Education Department and the Adult Education Bureau reserved the right to examine and assess any course suggestion before admitting it to the programme planning group.

Ten courses on political education were transferred to the General Studies department, a general increase in attendance fees of 120% to 130% was imposed, and the reduction for students and trainees was cut by two-thirds. The length of some courses was shortened by 40%, while at the same time fees were raised by 20%. Consequently, many political courses could not run at all.

Political education for target groups

The threat to Arbeit und Leben and to other aspects of VHS work led to the issue of a public statement by the teachers in charge of adult education in the University of Frankfurt.⁽⁵⁸⁾ It voiced their conviction of the imminent destruction of the hitherto politically progressive work of the VHS, because of: the rejection of the principle of social responsibility; the repression of politically controversial topics; the destruction of progressive education for women; the repression of critical views expressed by permanent and part-time staff; hostility to the trade unions; and the bureaucratisation of the Volkshochschule. The statement made the following points:

- *"The Volkshochschule is no longer allowed to offer courses in urban planning and citizens' participation, although the classes in development planning, traffic control, school-building projects and developing a museum site on the riverbank had set an example for the whole of West Germany".*

- "There was also clear interference with the educational provision for women wishing to achieve freedom and equality in their work and education". (The statement refers to the 50% cut in forums for women. Women represent 75% of VHS students, and, as a statistical survey showed, their interest in political questions has increased over recent years.)

- "Twenty-two per cent of the total number of classes were language courses for migrant workers and their families. There was also an increase in the number of courses leading to school-leaving examinations and occupational qualifications. One course each per term, dealing with practical and social questions and industrial law, was offered to migrant workers from three different countries. Four additional weekend seminars were held on these topics. But in relation to the large number of foreigners in Frankfurt, this provision is meagre indeed. Compared to the provision made by other VHS in Germany, Frankfurt offered very few opportunities for the native German population to mix with people from other countries. There had been only two discussion groups per term, on literature and language. The twelve courses dedicated to the preservation of cultural heritage and art were open only to a few foreign nationality groups".

- "As for provision for the elderly, the department for senior citizens provides a variety of leisure courses, which are so popular that the over sixty-fives are the largest student group in the VHS. But political education is not offered by this department. So far it has been given only by Arbeit und Leben, which carried out one weekend session in 1982, offering old people the opportunity to discuss their situation at work and in the union".

Political education by industry and commerce

The Education Foundation of Industry and Commerce in Hesse (Bildungswerk der Hessischen Wirtschaft) occupies only a third of a page in the 300 page manual, *Adult Education in Frankfurt*. This brief note, however, refers to an "extensive ... seminar programme of more than 200 pages" and lists, among major concerns, industrial and social politics.

The researcher's efforts to get a copy of the advertised large annual programme were unsuccessful, but a smaller brochure of only forty-five pages was obtained. It offered, among other courses, "socio-political seminars of one week's duration for young employees up to the age of twenty-five who are entitled to educational leave in Hesse". An additional seminar, described as a continuation of the first, was also on offer. Twelve such courses were listed in 1982. The brochure also listed seminars for youth representatives and shop stewards on explicitly political topics. This was a tightly knit system of

courses providing the participants with a progression from basic and intermediate to advanced classes.

Unfortunately, the programme descriptions do not really give a clear picture of the nature and extent of adult education provided by private industry and the employers' associations. Nor did our investigations yield specific information on the extent and nature of the work of this sector.

The Education Foundation of the German Clerical and Administrative Workers' Union, Frankfurt District, also places its main emphasis in adult education on basic and further vocational training. This is tied up with the Union's own political concerns. Thus, it expects its members to expand their knowledge as well as their vocational competence in order to establish a firm basis for specialised professional positions. It also demands a combination of political education with vocational training in order to promote a more flexible response to the problems of work and society. The Foundation bases its work, in the last analysis, on the assumption that vocational and political education are complementary and that any separation of these two aspects is artificial.

In view of these clearly defined aims and claims, it is interesting to note the contradiction in the structure of its educational organisation and practical work. The Union's colleges are responsible for the vocational side, while political education is covered by its regional branches. The curriculum of the Union's college in Frankfurt reflects nothing of the proclaimed concept of unity between political and vocational education; its educational provision consists mainly of self-contained course units leading to vocational qualifications, together with some language courses. The training of Union officials is the task of the regional branches, which also provide one-week educational leave seminars. The Union's information brochure advertises courses on a regular basis. In the various regional branches which would be responsible for running these courses, nothing was apparently known of the above-mentioned programme, nor could any references to these plans be found anywhere else.

The Hesse Charitable Education Foundation of the German Trades Union Congress, Frankfurt, is an institution set up jointly by the DGB, its individual unions and the Foundation for Vocational Continued Education of the German Trades Union Congress. Within the framework of commonly agreed educational goals, each body operates autonomously. They provide day and evening classes, weekend and one-week courses, as well as series of seminars for specific target groups of employees.

The joint object of the organisation is defined as furthering the unions' political aims and convincing members of the need for collective action.

The Frankfurt Region of the DGB held a number of evening seminars on historical topics in 1982, e.g. *The history of the city, The history of May Day, Working class culture in history*, etc. There were also practical classes for clerical workers, public sector employees, women, senior citizens, lay assessors in juvenile courts, members of youth welfare committees, migrant workers, industrial tribunal judges, etc. While this list is, of course, incomplete, it gives some impression of the wide range of provision.

Educational work in the individual unions is more limited. They confine themselves mainly to the specific interests of their respective occupations, as for example the introductory, foundation and advanced seminars run by the Industrial Union of Metal Workers. In 1982 this Union offered its Frankfurt members seven study groups in a continuous three-weekly cycle, dealing primarily with politico-economic issues.

In contrast to the unions, the regional organisation of the DGB is less concerned with specific union topics such as industrial law, wages policy, social security, industrial management and the training of union officials. A large part of DGB's general political education work and provision for target groups is delegated to Arbeit und Leben. The previously described 'concept of synthesis' is the most dominant educational idea within the trade union movement: political, vocational and general education are seen to be parts of a single process.

Another body in the field is the 'Academy of Work' at the University of Frankfurt. This is a private law school founded by the Land Hesse and the DGB, where able and committed union members can pursue a full-time one-year university course in economics, law or the social sciences.

Adult education by the churches

The Catholic Church's adult education work in Frankfurt is organised and supported by the regional office of the Catholic Land Study Group for Adult Education in Hesse. The work itself is largely carried out by parishioners working on a voluntary basis, and mainly deals with the socio-political field, aiming for Christian participation in the establishment of a democratic consensus on basic values. The Frankfurt regional office employs six full-time senior staff for adult education; two women in charge of family education, a principal each for theological education, women's work, workers' education and a person responsible for socio-political education in the church.

The Catholic Workers' Movement also engages in political education, concentrating its work mainly in working class areas of the city. It has succeeded in encouraging a good community spirit among the people.

The Protestant Church has a less well defined policy for adult education than the Catholic Church, the work being carried on through an organisation of various independent study groups. Adult education is only one aspect among many in their pastoral work and political education falls within the purview of a variety of groups. Among others, it is provided by the Office for Industrial and Social Work, the 'Women and Work' study group, the 'Department for Men', the 'Rectory for Women's Work', the 'Institute for Family Education', the Advice Bureau for Leisure activities and the Senior Citizens department.

One of the independent groups is 'Protestant Adult Education', which works throughout the city. It employs a head of political education and two further heads of department: one in charge of old people's education and the other supervising work with parents.

For the past ten years, the two main Churches have made some joint provision for adult education. The programme brochure lists series of lectures and discussions, study groups and workshops with topics on society and politics. The main emphasis is on:

- general political education/political commitment within the Church;
- joint responsibility at work/problems of employees/social questions;
- women's issues;
- peace;
- international relations/Third World development;
- urban development/environment;
- German for foreigners/foreign languages for Germans.

Adult political education provided by the Churches depends largely on the initiative of individuals working within them and on their ability to arrange appropriate courses in response to social and political developments. Since the provision of political education depends on the political attitude of the Church elders, individuals and groups, the picture as regards this branch of education varies tremendously from parish to parish.

University for senior citizens

In June 1982, Frankfurt University instituted a 'University for Senior Citizens'. The gerontologist, Professor Anita Karsten, says of it, *"Instead of teaching older people, we are concerned with social change and tackling the problems which the elderly meet in their immediate environment"*.

Lectures are combined with discussions on retirement, the contrasting views of young and old people, consumer attitudes of the elderly and mutual understanding between the young and the old. The course attracted 300 older students in its first term, in the summer of 1982. In

additional study groups, supervised by tutors, the new students had an opportunity to make suggestions for future programmes; these included *The generation gap, Attitudes to leisure in old age, The past and present role of women, Sexuality in old age, The significance of old people to the economy*, etc. It was hoped that there could be provision for young people to take part jointly with the older students in seminars and groups discussions.

Topics during the 1982/83 session were *Social impoverishment in old age, Leaving work, Handicap in old age, Sports for the elderly and Housing and self-reliance in old age*. The courses were very popular and demand rapidly doubled. The elderly students have expressed a wish to prepare a project on planning help for the elderly and to revise pre-retirement programmes.

The University for Senior Citizens reports good co-operation with the welfare associations, through a pooling of experience between the elderly students and the social workers and club leaders. They have come to the same conclusion as the UN World Congress in Vienna of July 1982, that old people are "very capable of action".

Autonomous adult education

Autonomous adult education means here those undertakings which are open to all who are interested and whose work is carried out independently and without any public funds. The three organisations described below are examples of this type of provision.

The Society for Cultural Politics and Vocational Training started its adult education activities in the autumn of 1982. It was founded by former VHS staff and by other adult educators who wished to continue political education work in the Hoechst industrial district of Frankfurt, free from the restrictive policies of the municipal administration. The establishment has become known as the Hoechst Education Workshop. All staff members are highly qualified and work without pay.

The work began with political education for women, young people and migrant workers; co-operation was envisaged with autonomous groups of migrant workers, environmental and Third World action groups and the peace movement. A start was made in the area of environmental policies. As, at the time of this investigation, the courses had only just started, it is not possible to report on the outcome of this intended co-operation. The courses are free of charge and have attracted a number of former VHS students.

The Educational and Cultural Centre for Women, set up by the Social Science Research and Education for Women Association, has become known as the Frankfurt Women's School. It was founded by former active members of a women's centre; in its present form it addresses itself to women who have reservations about joining women's groups. The founder-members, all of them sociologists or teachers, have

practical experience in adult education and vocational retraining. The work is based on the assumption that all women can do something, but are often unaware of their own abilities. The success of the first eight courses, during the winter, led to an expansion of provision to twenty courses in the spring.

Up to now, the courses have been for unemployed women, housewives and older women, requiring their active involvement to achieve a better understanding of themselves. Wives of migrant workers have shown reluctance to join and a special course for them had to be cancelled. Besides these courses, there was provision for young female students (free of charge) and a well-attended discussion forum where women could exchange experiences. The courses last for twelve to thirteen weeks, with total attendance fees of DM 50. Women between thirty-five and forty have so far shown the greatest interest in these courses.

As they have now found a private sponsor, the Frankfurt Women's School is looking for suitable accommodation in which to set up an advice centre, a crèche, a library and a cafe to justify their title 'Educational and Cultural Centre for Women'. So far, the work has been financed by donations, membership and attendance fees.

The Frankfurt Centre for the Unemployed was set up by a group of unemployed people as a meeting place for others who were unable to find work. It was obvious that, with the rapid growth of unemployment in certain strata of society, a centre for the unemployed was long overdue, and a demand for facilities of this kind had widespread support among the unemployed in the city. The Centre has set itself the following objects: the maintenance of the ability to work; psychological support for the unemployed; the pursuit of common interests and joint activities; and public relations work to counteract discrimination against jobless people. The programme for achieving these aims is flexible, and an independent approach is guaranteed.

One area, however, has taken on a clearly defined pattern: for the maintenance and recovery of the ability to work, general and further education courses are to be offered, as well as cultural events (films, music, discussions, etc). The Centre intends to commission paid experts or qualified unemployed people to run the courses. The courses themselves will be based on the needs and interests of the participants.

Public relations work to counteract wholesale discrimination against the unemployed is combined with an attempt to make the public aware of the social causes of unemployment. To help achieve these objectives, there are plans to work with and through the mass media. Furthermore, the organisation hopes to co-operate with other institutions concerned with the problems of the unemployed, but in

order to avoid creating an unemployed ghetto, the Centre also wants to establish and maintain contacts with working people and their organisations.

The Centre considers itself independent of any party-political, religious or ideological allegiance. This independence is essential to guarantee the Centre's acceptability to all interested people and active members.

A large number of teachers have committed themselves to the Centre for the Unemployed. So far, they have had to make do with only two rooms, belonging to a church, for their meetings.

The Centre aims, above all, to assure equal rights and treatment of unemployed people within the individual unions of the DGB. It insists that the jobless should have not only the right to vote and to be represented on union committees, but also the right to join a union. The Centre also seeks participation by the unemployed in shop-floor meetings and in shop-stewards meetings. In addition, they want to set up a system of shop-stewards for the unemployed. They also want the DGB to co-operate with non-unionised organisations working with the unemployed and to involve unemployed union members in the unions' educational work, as well as providing socio-psychological guidance centres for them.

Concluding remarks

The structure of the institutions providing political education for adults in a large city like Frankfurt is so complex that it is difficult to achieve a comprehensive picture of provision and facilities.

The aim of the political education provided for adults in Frankfurt appears to be, above all, to advance the respective political goals of the bodies which provide it. Not only in the unions, industry and commerce, but also in the municipal Volkshochschule, teaching is based on the views of those with political power. But it is also the aim of political education to create the opportunity for political debate between groups with different opinions (e.g. adult education by the Churches).

The state-recognised adult education organisations in Hesse have a vested interest in blocking grants to any other establishments, since this might entail a reduction in their own resources.

Apart from the official bodies responsible for adult education in Frankfurt, a number of groups are trying to tackle through education such social problems as unemployment, disarmament, destruction of the environment, discrimination against women, urban planning and rehabilitation of individual urban areas, etc. Through the development of self-assertion and the organisation of interest groups, these bodies hope to bring about a change in unjust and damaging social situations.

These discussion circles, citizens' forums, study groups and self-help groups are a melting pot for various wants and needs, such as exchange of experiences, new insights, articulation of political interests, individual and collective guidelines for action.⁽⁵⁹⁾ These groups are rarely accepted by the established institutions of adult and further education, which have only occasionally permitted the use of their premises, let alone provided the specialist help which they have at their disposal.

Thus, two different types of adult education have evolved: the facilities provided by public and private bodies which, because of their political influence, receive public funding; and the autonomous learning groups, based on idealism, sustaining themselves through the unpaid work of their founders and members.

All these groups, whatever their financial circumstances, engage in political education for adults. This leaves the question, which of the types is of greater social efficacy? Is it that done by staff working for and in the interest of the institutions which employ and pay them, or is it that work which thrives on the commitment of all its group members to keep their group going through their joint efforts?



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